

T H E
ROMAN HISTORY,
IN
A SERIES OF LETTERS,
FROM A
NOBLEMAN TO HIS SON.

Omnis homines, qui sese student præstare, cæteris animalibus summa ope niti decet ne vitam silentio transeant, veluti pecora, quæ natura prona, atque ventri obedientia finxit.

SALLUST.

V O L. II.

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THE
ROMAN HISTORY.
IN A
SERIES OF LETTERS.

LETTER XXXVI.

THE success of Pompey crowned him with laurels, and raised him to the highest pitch of military honour, but at the same time it procured him enemies.

Tarquin Cataline, a man of noble birth, but dissolute manners, resolved to aggrandize himself at the expence of the public, while Pompey was abroad in quest of glory. He had so much duplicity in the whole of his conduct, that he could suit himself to persons of most opposite passions, and even acquire their esteem. Being in very necessitous circumstances, he proposed himself a candidate for the consulship with no other view but that of repairing his broken fortune, but failing in his attempt, he joined himself to Piso, and some other desperate men, who had formed themselves into a body with

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a resolution

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a resolution to murder the consuls, and possess themselves of their power. Their designs, however, were frustrated before they became ripe for action, which enraged Cataline so much, that he resolved by the assistance of a few wretches to raise a general insurrection in Italy, and set fire to the city of Rome. In the mean time two of the conspirators were sent to murder the great Cicero, who was the most inveterate enemy of Cataline, but he had notice of their intentions almost as soon as they had projected the scheme, so that he not only took proper measures to save his own life, but also to provide for the peace of the city. In the mean time, Cataline, with the most consummate impudence, went to the senate, and declared his innocence in so formidable and specious a manner, that some of the patricians began to look upon the whole as a false accusation preferred against him by his enemies.

Cicero, who had hitherto heard him with patience, could no longer conceal his resentment, but standing up, in the most eloquent manner, laid open the whole nature of the conspiracy. Cataline attempted to make a reply to what Cicero had advanced, but having made use of some illiberal reflections on that celebrated orator, the rest of the auditory refused to hear him. Upon that the conspirator declared, that since they would not hear him, he would involve the whole city in ruin. He then left the senate, and returned to his own house, where he was met by Lentulus and Cethegus, two of his friends, and it was agreed that they should leave Rome that night, and retire to Etruria, where Manilius, another of the conspirators, had promised to meet them with a very formidable army; for like all those who are conscious of guilt, they knew

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knew that nothing could screen them from justice, unless their scheme was put in execution.

The eloquence of Cicero in the mean time, induced the people to exert themselves in securing all those whom they suspected of treasonable practices, and among the rest they laid hold of Cæsius, Lentulus, and Cethuges, who were immediately confined in prison. Witnesses were produced against them from among the Allobogres, natives of that country now called Savoy, and they shewed the senate the letters of Lentulus, wherein he had persuaded them to take up arms against the Roman state.

Great debates arose in the senate concerning the manner in which the conspirators should be punished, and the majority were of opinion that they should be instantly put to death; but when it came to the turn of Julius Cæsar to deliver his sentiments, he repeated to the senate, that it would be a dangerous precedent to put them to death, because the same cruelties might be inflicted on the adverse party under any change that might happen to take place in the government. His opinion was, that they ought to be condemned to perpetual imprisonment, in order to spend the remainder of their days in wretchedness, while their consciences would be tormented with the remembrance of their crimes. This motion, made by Cæsar, was strongly opposed by Portius Cato, a man of the most rigid disposition, and on many occasions seemingly destitute of bowels of compassion. He insisted that the prisoners had been guilty of a capital offence, and wondered how any person should propose a mitigation of their punishment, especially as such lenient measures would induce Cataline to go on with vigor in his design of destroying the city, and establishing arbitrary

bitrary power. Cicero, in a most eloquent oration, seconded the motion made by Cato, and a majority being brought over to consent to the execution of the criminals, they were that night strangled in prison.

Cataline having received information that his accomplices were put to death, attempted to escape into Gaul, but he was intercepted in his march by Petreius, lieutenant to Antonius the consul, and a most bloody battle ensued, in which Cataline was slain, and his whole army cut off. When the news of this victory was brought to Rome, Cicero was distinguished with the highest honours, and Cato moved that he should be called the father of his country. Such was the state of affairs in Rome, when Pompey returned from the east, loaded with the spoils and honours already mentioned, so that it is easily to be conceived, that Rome, though freed from a dangerous conspiracy, would not be long without an absolute master.

Pompey was sensible of the state of his country, and as his ambition was equal to his valour, so he resolved to avail himself of the public discontents that then took place among the people. He made a bold attempt to set aside the freedom of election, by proposing two of his own creatures to be consuls, but he found himself disappointed, and therefore he resolved to take into his party such of the patricians as he thought could be dazzled by the brightness of his splendour, and consequently unable to penetrate into the depth of his schemes.

But while he was going on in this manner, and at the same time rivalled by Crassus, who opposed riches to generosity, a third person stood up to combat the prize with them, who had long been growing into esteem among his fellow citizens.

This

This was Julius Cæsar, nephew in the female line to the great Marius, and who had lately returned from Spain, where he had distinguished himself as a most able commander. He had already made himself extremely popular, and had passed through all the inferior offices with a reputation so untainted, that he seemed to reign in the hearts of the people as an object of veneration. He aspired at the consulship, and at the same time his love of glory, induced him to wish for a triumph, although he knew that both could not take place at the same time, for he must have been honoured with the triumph before he came into the city, and he could not obtain the consulship till he came into the senate.

Cæsar had abilities far superior to many of those heroes who gain laurels in the field of battle, and therefore without regarding the shadow of an empty name, he resolved to bring over the most powerful of the patricians to his party. Pompey, to whom he first made his address, was fond of the assistance of one who had acquired honours that began to shine as conspicuous as his own, and at the same time Crassus was brought into their measures.

These three having agreed that no act should pass into a law, nor any thing be decided in the senate without their approbation. The people once more became slaves, or rather their slavery was continued under another name, which at that time was called the first triumvirate.

A confederacy of such a nature could not subsist long without interruption, for it is natural to suppose that each of the parties were equally ambitious. The people were fond of liberty even to licentiousness; the senate supported by the whole body of the patricians, could not bear the thoughts of being

obliged to submit to a superior power, from whom they were to receive laws ; so that Rome was like a body with three heads, nor did they know to whom they were, consistent with the laws, to pay special obedience. So precarious is the state of human affairs, and so dangerous is it for the people to split into parties.

The senate, whose power was now reduced to little more than a shadow, yet had some notions of their original importance, and therefore when Cæsar proposed himself a candidate for the consulship, they contrived to join in office with him one Bibulus, whom they thought qualified to check his ambitious views, but they were deceived, for Cæsar's popularity bore down all opposition. With his mind still fixed on universal empire, he proposed that some lands in the Campania should be divided among such of the poor citizens as had three children, at which the senate complained, but this only served to make him more popular than ever.

The people rose in a tumultuous manner, and obliged the senators to take an oath that the Licinian law should be continued, while Crassus and Pompey were induced to join with their colleague in office ; though he only made them dupes of his intrigues. He gave Pompey his daughter Julia in marriage, so that he was sure of his friendship, which in a natural sense is superior to all other considerations. It was then agreed to divide the empire among them, which was done in the following manner. Syria, and all the other Asiatic territories, were consigned to Crassus by his own desire, because he hoped thereby to increase his riches.

Pompey was to govern Spain and all the provinces depending on it, to which he was the more inclined, because there were no wars at that time in the place, and

and as he had been long fatigued in the service of his country, he resolved to spend some time at Rome, and commit the management of all public affairs to his lieutenant. Gaul, the most important and the most valuable of all the provinces was given to Cæsar, and at the same time it was enacted by the senate that he should remain there five years, in order to subdue some of those ferocious people who refused to submit to the Roman yoke.

In the mean time, Cicero, who had ever been attentive to the liberties of his fellow citizens, and jealous of those who seemed to engross too large a share of power, left nothing undone to cross and thwart all the schemes projected by Cæsar. On the other hand, Cæsar procured Publius Clodius, a man of dissolute morals, to oppose Cicero, because he was afraid of the force of his eloquence in his absence, and likewise because Clodius had given his opinion against Cicero in the condemnation of the criminals concerned in the Cataline conspiracy, so that they were the most inveterate enemies to each other.

Cicero finding that a storm was ready to burst out upon him, applied to Cæsar to take him as his lieutenant to Gaul, but his proposal was evaded by the most frivolous pretences, and the celebrated orator was accused by Clodius of having condemned Roman citizens without giving them leave to make a public defence. In consequence thereof, notwithstanding all he had done to serve his country, he was banished from Italy; his estates were confiscated, and his houses demolished. Cato was sent to the island of Cyprus, under a pretence that the government of it would be a high honour to him, but in reality it was nothing less than a scheme proposed by Cæsar, in order to accomplish his favourite purpose,

namely, that of setting himself up above the senate, to reign with an absolute authority over the Roman people. While things continued in this state, Cæsar set out for Gaul, where he remained eight years, and conquest crowned all his undertakings; for besides many barbarous nations whom he subdued, he made two expeditions into Britain, and made the inhabitants acknowledge his authority, and promise to pay tribute to the Romans. Indeed, his conquests in Britain were but of a partial nature, but as he was the first who had ever penetrated into this island in a hostile manner, so he has been extolled in all succeeding ages.

Cæsar in all his conquests, distinguished himself by so much clemency, that he even gained the affections of those whom he conquered; and Pompey, who still remained in Rome, did all he could to promote his interest, because he did not know what was the object of his ambition. Crassus and Pompey sent notice to Cæsar, that they would meet him, in order to consider of the most proper methods to be used to preservye the power they were in possession of, but the senate remained inflexible; so that after several struggles between slavery and liberty, things continued just as they were before. In the mean time, Julia, the daughter of Cæsar, and wife of Pompey, died, so that the connections arising from motives of consanguinity, seemed to be at an end; because Pompey resolved to form measures altogether different from those he had previously engaged in.

Indeed, the avarice of Crassus gave a new turn to the state of affairs in Italy; for he having engaged in a battle with the Parthians, without being properly acquainted with military discipline, saw all his forces cut off, and at last died in battle, not so much a great hero as one who had engaged

engage in a romantic undertaking, without considering the consequences that might flow from an action where both parties were eager in the pursuit of glory.

Crassus being thus taken away, his two remaining associates had nothing left but that of contending which should be greatest, there being no person in the commonwealth endowed with abilities sufficient to oppose them, so that Rome was considered as a prize which must be the property either of the one or the other.

Pompey now found that Cæsar was the darling of the people, an appellation to which he had been justly entitled, in consequence of his condescending manner of conducting himself, even to his most inveterate enemies. The soldiers were attached to him from motives of real benevolence, because he paid the debts they had contracted out of the spoils he had taken from those nations whose pusillanimity obliged them then to submit to the warlike conqueror.

At this time, Clodius, the favourite of such of the people as were in an opposite interest, was killed by Millo, in one of the roads leading to the city, upon which a tumult ensued, and the dead body being brought to the senate, the populace were so much enraged, that they set fire to the Millos house, and the corpse was consumed along with it. Confusion took place in every part of the city, and nothing was to be seen but destruction and carnage from one end to the other.

The people who wished well to the interests of their fellow-citizens, wished for a more regular form of government, and as Pompey was at that time extremely popular, it was proposed that he should be appointed dictator. But Cato opposed this motion, because he thought it would be giving too

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much power to one man, and therefore insisted that he should be made sole consul for one year, for this reason, that at the expiration of that time, he would be obliged to give an account to the senate and the people in what manner he had discharged the duties of his office.

This resolution was agreed to, and Cato, by his influence in the senate, procured an act that a body of forces should be assigned to Pompey, in order to support his dignity, while Millo, who had murdered Clodius, was condemned to perpetual banishment.

On the other hand, Cicero said all that an eloquent orator could express, in order to defend his friend Clodius, but all in vain, for the people crowded into the forum, and the expressive words of the orator were lost in the clamour of the multitude. Pompey had married the daughter of Metellus, a young lady of great beauty and merit, and in consequence of family connections, he thought that there might still be a possibility of establishing his power.

LETTER XXXVII.

POMPEY took notice to the senate, that Cæsar ought not to be elected to the consulship, unless he appeared in person at Rome, and he brought over a great majority to second his motion. But Cæsar, who knew that he had the army on his side, resolved to act on principles diametrically opposite. He resolved to remain in Gaul, till things were ripe for execution, for he had not the least doubt but he would be able to place himself at the head of the republic, and so establish a despotic power.

The

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The senate, in order to weaken the power that jealousy induced them to imagine Cæsar had assumed, sent an order to him, for two of the legions that composed his army, to march against the Parthians, which was only a feint to cover their real design ; but Cæsar was as cunning as them. He knew that things were not yet ripe for execution, and therefore he sent the legions, in order to conceal his real intentions, for he had not the least doubt of accomplishing his favourite purpose.

The senate finding Cæsar so ready to comply with their demands, resolved to proceed further, and it was proposed by them that he should be called home ; because they began to be jealous of his power, especially as the army was attached to him from motives of affection rather than interest.

Previous to this resolution of the senate, Cæsar, like an able politician, had brought over some of the most respectable of the citizens to his interest, among whom was Curio, one of the tribunes of the people, a man endowed with that species of eloquence which is calculated to rouse and inflame.

This man, in a public speech that he made in the senate, insisted that Cæsar should lay down his office of commander in Gaul, but at the same time he proposed that Pompey should set him the example, for both had been longer in power than was consistent with the safety of the state. Pompey, who had been deceived by false representations, was easily led into the snare, and seemed willing to resign ; but Curio having dismissed the senate in virtue of his office, Marcellus, who was attached to Pompey from motives of friendship, convoked it again, and it was agreed that Cæsar should be recalled while Pompey was to continue still in office. A majority, however, of the senate, over-ruled the motion made

by

by Marcellus, and before they had time to come to any deliberation in an unanimous manner, news were brought them that Cæsar had crossed the Alps, and was marching at the head of the army towards Rome.

Cæsar had so many friends in Rome, that news were sent as soon as any thing transpired, wherein he might be supposed to have the least concern, and therefore he sent notice to the senate, that he was willing to lay down his employment, as soon as Pompey did his; but all his proposals were rejected with contempt, by men who had nothing to boast of as merit but their own self sufficiency.

Cæsar finding that he had no reason to expect any favour from the senate, marched his troops over the Alps to Ravenna, from whence he sent a letter to the consuls, offering to give up all his offices, upon condition that Pompey did the same; adding, that if his proposal was not immediately complied with, he would appear as an enemy before the gates of Rome, in order to do justice to his countrymen, who had long laboured under oppression from those whose duty it was to have governed them with equity.

The manner in which Cæsar wrote his letter to the consuls, gave such umbrage to the senate, that a decree passed, injoining him to give up all his commissions, or in case of refusal, to be declared an enemy to the commonwealth, and that it should be lawful for any man to kill him wherever he was found.

The city of Rome was now filled with contention from the one end to the other, and several of those who had been most active in opposing Cæsar, began to think themselves in danger, and therefore Curio, with

with Marcus Antonius and Longinus, went to his camp and implored his protection.

Cæsar, who was no stranger to the feelings that naturally arise in the human heart, produced Curio and the others, before the soldiers, in the humiliating dress in which they made their appearance, and spoke with such forcible eloquence, upon the cruelty of the senate, that the whole army begged he would lead them to Rome, in order to revenge such flagrant injuries.

Finding the army thus ready to second all his motions, he went to supper in his tent with his friends, and after conversing in the most cheerful manner on subjects of philosophy and other parts of literature, he went out under pretence of returning in a short time; but instead of doing so, he went to a detached party of the army, which he had sent as far as Rubicon, a small river that terminated the bounds of his government, and beyond which, not to pass without leave from the senate.

When he arrived at the place, he found the greatest part of the army filled with the most superstitious notions; but Cæsar was too much of a politician to be intimidated by vulgar errors. He took notice that death or glory was now before them, and plunging himself headlong into the river, the soldiers followed his example, and resolved to conquer or die.

Rome at this time exhibited one universal scene of confusion, and Pompey, by whose influence Cæsar had been raised to grandeur, began to repent of his conduct when it was too late. Cato, the most popular man in the city, reproached him with having been too remiss in attending to the affairs of the republic, and all that Pompey could alledge, was, that Cæsar had seduced him, and concealed

from

from him his private sentiments. He said he was ready to conduct any army they thought proper to raise against Cæsar, at the same time intimating that their affairs were not in so desperate a state but that they might be retrieved, and peace restored to the commonwealth, if the people would stand by each other, and not suffer any person to wrest from them those privileges, which had been transmitted to them by their ancestors.

Having thus in some measure encouraged the people to hope for success, he put himself at the head of the two legions that Cæsar had sent from Gaul, and marched to the city of Capua, where he resolved to wait for Cæsar, although he knew that he had not force sufficient to oppose him.

Cæsar, whose genius in war was equal to his unbounded liberality in times of peace, marched his army forward with the utmost rapidity, and the first place that opposed his progress, was Corfinium, in which was a garrison of soldiers under the command of Domitius, who had been appointed by the Roman senate to succeed Cæsar in his government. Domitius finding that he could not any longer protract the siege of the city, resolved to make his escape, and in the mean time Lentulus, the consul, came to Cæsar, and implored his pardon in the most abject terms. Cæsar would not suffer him to humble himself as a suppliant, but told him, that he might make himself entirely easy, as he did not come to Italy with any intention of enslaving the people, but merely to restore peace to the commonwealth, and to redress the grievances of those who had been injured by the illegal decrees of the senate, without the consent of the people.

An answer to the soldiers declared in such a sincere and compassionate manner, could not fail of gaining

Cæsar

Cæsar many advantages, and therefore no sooner was it communicated to those that were in the city, than they resolved to put themselves under his protection. The soldiers were still attached to Cæsar from motives of gratitude, and Pompey conscious thereof, retreated to Brandusium, where he resolved to stand the event of a siege. In the mean time Cæsar sent a messenger to him desiring a farewell interview, but Pompey, who had been looked upon as the father of the city, returned for answer, that he could do nothing without the consent of the consuls, upon which Cæsar resolved to prosecute the war, let the consequence be ever so fatal. Pompey resolved to embark his men on board such boats as were then in the harbour, and transport them over to Dyrachium, by which he saved himself, though at the same time he left Italy exposed to all the designs of the haughty conqueror.

Cæsar, who was well acquainted with the springs of action in the human heart, resolved to march towards Rome, and enrich his soldiers out of those treasures that had been laid up as a sacred deposit for the security of the state, and which Pompey had never pretended to meddle with.

When he arrived at Rome, the people received him with the utmost acclamations of joy, but when he approached the place where the treasure was deposited, he was opposed by Metellus, the tribune of the people, who told him that no person whatever had a right to meddle with that money, because it was set apart to supply future wars that might happen between them and the Gauls. Metellus called superstition to his aid, and told Cæsar that the gods had deemed destruction to the man who should march towards it, but the hero no way intimidated, forced open the doors of the sacred repository,

pository, and found no less than three thousand pounds weight of gold, besides silver and other valuable effects of an immense quantity.

With part of this money he rewarded those brave soldiers who had served under him both in Gaul and in Britain, and not doubting but he would be able to conciliate their affections to himself, he resolved to leave Rome, and if possible subdue Pompey as well as those who acted under him in the character of lieutenants, both in Spain and in other parts.

Cæsar next prepared to set out for Spain, and when he took leave of his friends, he said with his usual good humour, I shall fight a gallant army, without a general, but upon my return, I must fight a general who will not have an army to command.

The army under the command of Cæsar was one of the most brave and hardy that had ever taken the field. They were composed of veterans who had exposed themselves to a thousand dangers, and suffered an infinite number of hardships. Indeed, the hardships they had to suffer in crossing the Alps, are so amazing, that if the form of that country, even in this age, did not point out the probability of them, the whole might be looked upon as romantic. But generosity on the part of Cæsar, and perseverance in his men, who admired him as something more than human, enabled them to conquer every difficulty. Leaving a detachment of his forces to besiege Marseilles he continued his march to Spain, where he was opposed by Pompey's lieutenants, and at the same time found his army in want of provisions. This induced him to make a great number of small boats covered with leather, with which he crossed a large river, and procured every thing he stood in need of.

It was not long before he gave his enemies a proof of his superior knowledge in military affairs, for he made

made a feint as if he would have turned the course of the river, so that he had an opportunity of dividing his forces, and obtained a complete victory, surrounding the adherents of Pompey on every side.

Spain being now entirely in his possession, he dismissed the prisoners in the most generous manner, and then returning to Marseilles, forced that city to surrender to his victorious arms. Clemency, his favourite virtue, induced him to pardon all those who had opposed him, and leaving a proper governor in the place, he set out for Rome, where he was received with demonstrations of joy.

In the mean time, Pompey, who had crossed over to Greece, was active in making every necessary preparation to oppose Cæsar, to which he was strongly induced by Cato and Cicero, who had both joined his army. Anthony, who commanded for Cæsar, had been defeated, but nothing could damp the spirit of Cæsar, who having put his army under proper regulations, prepared to set out for Greece, and meet his opponent before he had an opportunity of returning to Italy. It is true, he had many difficulties to encounter, for it was now the depth of winter, and besides the want of a sufficient number of ships, he found most of the Italian party blocked up by Bibulus, a brave naval officer, who commanded under Pompey. All that Cæsar could do, was to combat five of his twelve legions, which in the whole amounted to no more than twenty-six thousand horse and foot included, and these by good fortune landed at a place called Pharsalia. Having landed his forces, he sent back the vessels to bring over the remainder from Italy, but thirty of them falling into the hands of Bibulus, he set them all on fire, and every one on board perished.

Cæsar

Cæsar was as great a politician as a warrior, and therefore he sent one Rufus, whom he had taken prisoner, to make proposals of an accommodation to Pompey, offering at the same time that all their disputes should be referred to the senate ; but Pompey knew that the Romans was too much attached to Cæsar to grant himself any favour, so that he rejected his offers. Pompey finding the critical state he was in, left Macedonia, where he had been raising forces, and marched to Dyracchium, in order to prevent that city from falling into the hands of Cæsar ; but when he arrived there he found that many of his troops had deserted, for they had been collected from so many nations, that they had no real regard for the common cause.

At last both armies came in sight of each other on the opposite banks of the river Apsus, but although the men were eager to come to a general engagement, yet both the commanders were too prudent to venture precipitately upon that which was to determine their future fortunes. Cæsar, who had waited with the utmost impatience for the arrival of the remainder of his army from Italy, disguised himself in the habit of a peasant, and employed a fisherman to carry him over to Brandusium ; but the storm was so great, that they could not proceed, so that he was once more obliged to return to his camp, where he was received by the soldiers with every demonstration of joy. Soon after his arrival, a messenger came to inform him, that Anthony and Calenus, his two lieutenants, were landed with the forces at Appolonia, upon which he made the proper disposition to effect a junction. On the other hand, Pompey had done all in his power to prevent Cæsar's forces from joining, but his schemes were all disconcerted by the vigilance of his opponent, and he was obliged

obliged to seek refuge near Dyracchium, where he had an opportunity of procuring provisions for his army from those Grecian states who were in alliance with him. Cæsar's forces were reduced to great want, but they had been so long inured to hardships, that nothing seemed too difficult for them.

These distresses, however, only served to point out an opportunity for Cæsar to make a further display of those military talents with which nature had liberally endowed him, and which had been improved both by art and experience.

Behind the place where Pompey was encamped, there were several hills and rising grounds, which Cæsar took possession of, by which the enemy were in a manner blocked up. Pompey was now in such distress, by reason of all communication between him and the neighbouring country being cut off, that he resolved to make one desperate effort, and therefore he sent some of his ships to attack such forts as Cæsar had caused to be thrown up along the shore. This had the desired effect, and Pompey having extricated himself out of his difficulties, encamped his men in an open plain near the sea, where he had an opportunity of procuring provisions.

Cæsar, finding that if he remained any longer inactive, his men would become dispirited, resolved to come to a general engagement, and therefore attacked the advanced guard of Pompey's army, that lay encamped in a wood. At first Cæsar's army began to give way, while Pompey pressed upon them with the utmost vigour, but Cæsar kept possession of his entrenchments, so that Pompey, who was afraid of being led into an ambuscade, drew off his men, and put all the prisoners he had taken to the sword.

Cæsar,

Cæsar, though no stranger to his own abilities as a general, yet was not ignorant of the shining qualities that adorned Pompey, called his army together, and in the most insinuating manner represented to them that they were still more than a match for the enemy, and therefore proposed marching towards Appolonia, which he effected, though closely pursued by some detachments from Pompey's army.

Scipio, one of Pompey's lieutenants, was then in Thessaly, and Domitius, who commanded a legion for Cæsar, was in Macedonia, and therefore both the generals endeavoured, if possible, to prevent these auxiliaries from being intercepted in joining their respective leaders. Cæsar marched with the utmost expedition to Gomphi, a town on the frontiers of Thessaly, garrisoned by a part of Pompey's army, which he took in a few hours, and gave all belonging to the inhabitants up to the soldiers. From thence he continued his march to Metropolis, which he also took, so that he was now master of all Thessaly, except Larissa, where Scipio had fortified himself with the forces under his command, in the strongest manner. Pompey, notwithstanding his great prudence and calm deliberations before he ventured upon an engagement, yet found that it was in a manner impossible to keep his men any longer from coming to a general engagement. Accordingly he marched to Thessaly, and encamped his men in an open plain called Pharsalia, where he was joined by Scipio, his lieutenant, and such forces as he had been able to raise for him.

Having proceeded so far, he resolved to provoke Cæsar to a general engagement, who found it in a manner impossible to restrain the impetuosity of his forces any longer. The army under the command of Pompey was the most numerous; but Cæsar's were

were more inured to hardships, and much more regularly instructed in the military art. Pompey had many brave officers under him to conduct the detached party of the army, but the soldiers who fought under Cæsar had nothing but his abilities to confide in. Cæsar persuaded his men, that he had done every thing in his power to restore peace to the commonwealth, while Pompey on the other hand persuaded his soldiers that his cause was the cause of the public. Thus both endeavoured to shelter themselves under a pretence of having the public good only in view, while their sole intentions were to establish their own superiority. Both, however, were still afraid to venture out of their entrenchments, and yet in the most unexpected manner both struck their tents at the same time. Cæsar said all he could to encourage his men, telling them, that notwithstanding superiority of numbers, yet there was not the least doubt but they would obtain a complete victory.

Pompey was not remiss in encouraging his men, and because he had a great number of cavalry, he doubted not but they would be able to out-flank those under the command of Cæsar. Labienus, one of his lieutenants, seconded all his operations with the greatest alacrity, and Pompey being almost assured of success, led on his men to oppose his victorious rival. We need not be surprised to hear, that two such accomplished generals would do every thing in their power to dispose of their forces in a proper manner, especially as the empire of the world depended upon the success of the day. Accordingly Pompey divided his men into three departments. The centre, consisting of such forces as had been raised in Syria, was committed to the direction of Scipio. Domitius Ænobardus commanded

manded the legions who had been brought from Spain, and were placed on the right, while Pompey on the left put himself at the head of all those veterans who from motives of discontent had deserted from Cæsar's army, or who had been dismissed by him as persons not proper to be trusted in matters of such importance. In the same manner Cæsar divided his army with equal prudence; for Domitius Calvinus was placed in the centre, Mark Anthony on the left, and himself on the right, that he might have the glory of dying, or subduing his rival Pompey.

LETTER XXXVIII.

HAVING thus attended to the dispositions made by two such celebrated commanders, it is necessary that we should be as particular as possible in relating an event that made Cæsar, emperor of Rome, and in a manner opened the way for uniting all the contending parties.

Cæsar had raised and disciplined the tenth legion while he was in Gaul, and that was the corps that had so nobly opposed the Britons. At their head he placed himself, and seeing that Pompey had ordered his horse to march all to one side, he began to imagine what were his real intentions. Most of the horsemen in Pompey's army were young Roman noblemen, and Cæsar resolved to avail himself of that circumstance. He drew out six of the Cohorts, and concealed them behind the right wing, at the same time charging them not to throw their javelins as usual, but to wait the arrival of the cavalry, and then stab the horsemen in the face. What few horsemen he had, he placed in such a manner as to cover the tenth legion, for in that corps he placed the greatest confidence;

confidence ; and indeed under his command they had often done wonders.

The whole of the soldiers in both these formidable armies had grown old in military knowledge, so that it was natural to expect that they would perform wonders. Both the generals went from one line to each, exhorting the men to exert themselves in defence of those privileges for which they had so often signalized themselves. Pompey represented the necessity they were under to defend the consuls, and restore liberty to Rome, while Cæsar on the other hand, told his legions, that the fate of the day would decide whether Rome was to be domineered over by every petty tyrant, or whether it was not more necessary that peace should be restored to all ranks of people.

Cæsar at first ordered his men to begin the charge, because they were become impatient to engage, but as they approached to attack the first line of Pompey's army, they found them seemingly unwilling to engage. Both armies had the utmost opinion of each other's abilities, but at last those under the command of Cæsar, rushed forward among the enemy with their swords drawn, after they had thrown their javelins. The shock was sustained with the greatest bravery by Pompey's soldiers, and in the mean time Cæsar's army beginning to lose ground, he ordered the six Cohorts to advance, and strike their javelins into the faces of the enemy's horsemen. This unusual method of fighting put the cavalry in the utmost confusion, for they seemed every one eager to save himself. Being thus put into confusion, they fled, and left the foot, whom they ought to have supported, exposed to Cæsar's men.

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The Cohorts pursued their advantage with unabating vigour, while Cæsar attacked Pompey's flank, thereby thinking to put them into such confusion, that victory would be easily obtained. To complete his scheme, Cæsar brought up his reserved lines, and they charged the enemy with such impetuosity, that the lines broke, and the soldiers fled to their camp. In this critical moment, Cæsar discovered one of those shining qualities, by which every part of his life had been distinguished. Sure of victory, he called out to his men to pursue the strangers, but not to offer any injury to those who were Romans. This had such an effect on the adverse party, that they immediately laid down their arms, and submitted to what terms the conqueror thought proper to prescribe.

In the mean time the auxiliaries were cut in pieces in great numbers, thinking to shelter themselves in their camp; but Cæsar determined not to loose the present opportunity, attacked them with such impetuosity, that they fled in the utmost disorder, and joined some of their other companies, who had taken shelter in the mountains. As soon as Cæsar found himself in possession of the enemy's camp, he was surprised to see the luxurious splendor that appeared in the tents of the chiefs, for it had more the appearance of an eastern entertainment, than that of the character of military officers, who had no dependance on any thing but their courage.

Cæsar, however, would not suffer his soldiers to touch any thing belonging to the enemy, till he had defeated such as had taken shelter in the mountains, for he knew the fatal effects of luxury, and that the best disciplined armies had been enervated by it. Accordingly he drew a line across the mountains, while the scattered remains of Pompey's army being reduced

reduced to the greatest straits for want of water, attempted to get to the city of Larissa, where they doubted not but they would get a fresh supply of provisions.

In this resolution they found themselves disappointed by the vigilance of Cæsar, who opposed their march by a body of men, whom he dispatched for that purpose, so that the poor wretches were obliged to retire again to one of the mountains, where to their great joy they had the good fortune to meet with some fresh water. But Cæsar pressed them so hard, that they were obliged to beg their lives in the most abject manner. The heroic conqueror of the world, gave on this occasion a fresh specimen of his clemency, for no sooner had the fugitives laid down their arms, than he generously forgave them, and ordered them to be incorporated with his army. By these means he not only defeated his enemies, but he also conquered their most obstinate prejudices, and reigned as a sovereign in their hearts.

Such papers as fell into his hands, he ordered to be destroyed, lest any Roman families might be injured by them, and such as did not chuse to enlist under his standard, were suffered to go where they pleased. Having thus done every thing that could have been performed by the greatest skill, or executed by the most superior courage, he reviewed his army, and such as had been left to take care of the spoils in Pompey's camp, he took along with him in order to reduce the city of Larissa.

Pompey had fled to Larissa in disguise, tortured with the most agonizing reflections, and from thence he travelled along the banks of the river Peneus, where he got on board a fishing boat, and soon after the master of a trading vessel, who had known him in prosperity, generously granted him an asylum in

his ship. He dispatched a few of his attendants to Leibos for his wife Cornelia, whom he had left there, but when they arrived, she was so much overwhelmed with grief, that she fell into convulsion fits, and it was sometime before she was removed. At last she recovered, and went to meet her husband, who received her with tenderness, mixed with despair, but at the same time encouraged her to hope for better things, from a reverse of fortune that might very probably happen. The former clemency of Pompey, when he was in possession of power, had endeared him to the natives of the island, who came to offer him their assistance, but he advised them rather to submit to the conqueror: “ For (said he) Cæsar, though my enemy, yet is generous.” He and his beloved wife Cornelia having embarked, the ship continued its course to Rhodes, but the people refused to admit him, upon which he sailed to Atilia, where he found some faithful friends who still adhered to him. But he was still sensible that he could not make head against Cæsar, and therefore all his hopes were centered in the alliances he had formed with foreign states. Some of his friends proposed that he should retire to Numidia, and others that he should take shelter among the Parthians, but at last he resolved to sail for Egypt, where he arrived, and sent messengers on shore, imploring the protection of Ptolemy the king. The king of Egypt was then a minor, so that the affair was referred to his guardians, among whom were Photinus, a eunuch, Theodorus, an orator, and Achillus, who commanded the Egyptian army. Violent debates arose in what manner they should act, for they were afraid that if they granted him refuge, Cæsar would attack them with his whole force, and if they rejected

jected his proposal, then he might stir up some of the neighbouring nations against them. At last, after much debate, Theodotus proposed that he should be conducted from his ship to the next harbour, but that as soon as he landed he should be killed. Accordingly, a small vessel was sent to conduct him to shore, and the command was given to Septimius, who had formerly commanded under Pompey.

Pompey and his friends were much surprised that he was not received in a more splendid manner, but what was their horror when they saw him stabbed dead by Septimius as soon as he landed. His head was cut off in order to be sent as a present to Cæsar, and the body being left on the shore, one of his attendants gathered together some wrecks of a ship, and reduced it to ashes according to the Roman custom, after which the ashes were deposited at the foot of a rising ground.

Such was the end of one of the greatest commanders that ever appeared on the theatre of life, and who might have long before reduced his country to slavery, had not glory been his reigning motive. Till he was opposed by Cæsar, he seemed to be without a rival, but that celebrated commander put his military skill to the severest trial, and even triumphed over him. In the latter part of his life, he seems to have had the same design in view as Cæsar, namely, that of setting himself up as absolute sovereign of the Roman people, but had he even succeeded in that undertaking, there is not the least reason to imagine that he would have acted in a more generous manner than his victorious rival, whose success at the battle of Pharsalia, set him up as superior to every opposition.

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Cæsar having thus defeated the only general that was able to oppose him in the field, did not lose his time in idleness, a rock upon which many heroes have split. He sailed from one port to another, in order to overtake Pompey, and at last having learned that he had taken shelter in Egypt, he set out for that country with only four thousand men, but his name struck terror wherever he came, and bore down all opposition. When he arrived in Egypt, he learned in what manner Pompey had been murdered, and his head was presented to him; but the hero, instead of offering any indignity, ordered a monument to be erected to his memory. The next thing that Cæsar did was to assert his authority as a Roman consul, to regulate the civil affairs of Egypt, and for that purpose he sent for some more forces, ^{else} The Roman senate had, by an act of assumed power, banished the celebrated Cleopatra with her sister Arsinoe to Syria, but Cæsar sent notice for her to return. In the mean time Photinus, the guardian of the young king Ptolemy, brother and husband of Cleopatra, raised an army in order to besiege Cæsar while he lay in the city of Alexandria. The forces that Cæsar had under him, were not sufficient to defend the city, and therefore he took possession of the isle of Phares, after having destroyed all his ships, lest they should fall into the enemy's hands.

Cleopatra had raised an army to assert her right to the throne of Egypt, but no sooner had she heard that Cæsar had become her friend, than she resolved to throw herself under his protection, not doubting but her charms would plead more powerfully than any forces whatever.

Accordingly

U. C. Accordingly she set out for Egypt, and
 being afraid that she might fall into the
 hands of her enemies, she disguised herself,
 and getting on board a vessel, was carried in a
 coverlid to the palace by one Apolodorus. Her
 charms, and what was still more, her behaviour, no
 way consistent with decency, soon captivated the
 heart of Cæsar, who became her advocate from the
 strongest of all motives, namely, love.

While Cæsar was doing every thing he could to support the interest of Cleopatra, her sister Arsinoe was not idle, for by her intrigues she had caused a mutiny in the Egyptian army, in consequence of which, Achillas, the commander, was murdered, and Ganymede, one of her favourites, appointed general in his room. But soon after, Cæsar was obliged to take refuge on board a small vessel in the river, to which he was followed by so many of the people, that he flung himself over-board into the water, and with his Commentaries in his hand, swam till he got to the fleet that lay before the palace, by which he discovered himself to be as great a man as an individual as ever commanded an army.

The Egyptians finding that they had no reason to hope that ever they could conquer Cæsar by open force, had recourse to stratagem, and consistent with their natural duplicity of conduct, they proposed making peace upon condition that he would deliver up their young king, that his authority might give a sanction to the treaty. This, Cæsar complied with, but Ptolemy, though only a boy, took part with his countrymen, and spirited them up to assert his title to the crown.

Cæsar was now reduced to the greatest difficulties, but Mithridates Pergamenus, one of his partisans, having raised an army in Syria, came to his assistance,

sistance, and the Egyptians were defeated with great slaughter. Ptolemy was drowned in attempting to make his escape, and the whole nation having submitted to Cæsar, Cleopatra, with her young brother then an infant, were placed upon the throne, and Arsinoe, with her favourite, were obliged to make their escape in the most precipitate manner.

For some time Cæsar seemed to have forgot that courage by which he had been raised to so much grandeur, by giving himself up to the enjoyment of the captivating charms of the beloved Cleopatra, but his brave soldiers, who had served him in all his battles, remonstrated to him on the impropriety of his conduct, so that he left Egypt in order to oppose Pharneas, a Grecian prince, who had encroached upon the Roman territories.

This Pharneas was son of the great Mithridates, and as he had attempted to murder his father, Cæsar looked upon him with the utmost abhorrence, and having defeated him in a pitched battle, one of his officers slew him as he was attempting to take refuge in his capitol. Having settled the affairs of the east, and imposed a tribute upon the people of the different nations, he embarked for Italy, where he arrived at a very critical period, and before the people had the least expectation of his coming.

Anthony, whom the people had made choice of to conduct the affairs of Rome during the absence of Cæsar, had encouraged all sorts of licentiousness and debauchery, but Cæsar, by a conduct consistent with his character, brought about a general reformation, and established his sovereignty on a solid foundation. He then prepared to set out for Africa, where the remains of Pompey's army was headed by Cato and Scipio, and assisted by Juba, king of Mauritania, but a mutiny took place in the forces,

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on account of their not having received an equal dividend of the spoils that had been taken from the enemy. The tenth legion, which had been so long attached to Cæsar, first discovered their discontent, and marching from Campania to Rome, pillaged the people of their most valuable effects.

Cæsar, who knew that no time was to be lost, ordered such of the forces as were in the city to take care of the gates; and marched out to the Campus Martius, where he demanded in the most stern manner why the soldiers acted so, and who were their leaders. The manner in which he spoke answered the intended purpose, and after they had mentioned their grievances, Cæsar told them they might lay down their arms, and as a proof of his regard for their services, he promised that whatever spoils he took in any future expedition, should be equally divided among them. The soldiers were melted into gratitude when they considered the generosity of their leader, and all in one voice consented to go with him wherever he pleased, upon which he set sail for Africa, where he besieged the city of Tapfus.

Juba and Scipio marched to relieve the place, but both lost their lives in the attempt, so that none was left to command the scattered remains of their army but Cato; one of the greatest philosophers of the Stoic sect that Rome had ever produced. He had fled from the battle of Pharsalia with such of the forces as chose to follow his fortune; and when Cæsar landed in Africa, he was in possession of the city of Utica, and such was his notions of government that he looked upon the Roman senate as a most sacred institution.

With all the authority of a Roman consul, he called together such as had been senators, and were

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then in his army, and encouraged them to prosecute the war against Cæsar, at the same time putting them in mind of the glorious attachments of their ancestors, who from the meanest state had risen to the empire of the world.

The love of liberty generally promotes enthusiasm in the mind, and such was the case with Cato's friends when he spoke to them in a manner seemingly disinterested, but when they considered the difficulties they had to encounter, they thought it more prudent to provide for their own safety, and therefore resolved to trust to Cæsar's clemency, while Cato, who thought that Rome was to perish with the extinction of the senate, stabbed himself through the breast with his sword. Such was the end of Cato, whose austerity made him rather feared than loved, and his inflexible attachment to the letter of the law, made him often forget that benevolence by which the spirit of every institution ought to be distinguished. Had the government of Rome, which he wanted to support, been perfect and faultless, his cause would have been the best that ever was espoused, but experience shews the contrary, and therefore let his character be considered in any light whatever, it must be acknowledged that he was no better than an enthusiast.

As soon as Cæsar heard of Cato's death, he returned to Rome, and made a pompous entry into that city amidst the acclamations of the people, who had never before seen one of their own body crowned with so many laurels. So intoxicating is the glare of pomp, and so fatal is it to the liberties of a free people. The soldiers were all rewarded according to the time they had served, and their different stations, and the citizens were entertained in the most sumptuous manner. A contention for property

party had hitherto supported them, and they took leave of their liberties in the enjoyment of all the delicacies of a feast. No privileges were thought too great to be conferred on the man who had done so much to serve his country, and the people having invested him with plenary powers, he set himself on the throne of sovereignty, and began to attend to the duties incumbent upon him at the head of the Roman republick. He knew that luxury was the ruin of every state, and therefore he made several sumptuary laws, by which the more affluent among the citizens were confined down to rules, and all unnecessary offices were suppressed. That the city might not be destitute of inhabitants, he gave rewards to those who had the greatest number of children, by which means he endeared himself to all ranks of people, and the iron hand of sovereign authority seemed like golden chains.

Cæsar now thought to have enjoyed the pleasures of tranquility, but two of the sons of Pompey, with Labienus, one of his generals, raised an army in Spain, and therefore it was necessary that a force should be sent to oppose them. Accordingly, he set out for Spain, and arrived there before his enemies imagined he had left Italy. Both armies came to a general engagement at a place called Munda, and at the beginning, Cæsar was near being defeated, but just in the critical moment, when almost all his hopes began to vanish, the cohorts, the tenth legion, in order to regain the honour which they had for some time lost, pressed forward upon the enemy, and a total rout ensued. Sextus, one of the sons of Pompey, made his escape, but Cneius, his brother, was taken by the Romans, and his head being cut off, was given to Cæsar, who returned to Rome, after having exacted severe taxes

from the Spaniards, for having, contrary to the faith of treaties, assisted his enemies.

Thus we find that hitherto Cæsar's good fortune attended him, for wherever his army made its appearance, their enemies were obliged to give way. Discipline was the life of Cæsar's army, and his men learned rather to conquer by regularity than by any thing of a superior nature.

LETTER XXXVIII.

THE minds of the people are always elevated with hope, or depressed with fears, when a hero obtains the seat of sovereignty by conquest. Some of the Romans had reason to fear that Cæsar would indulge his resentment in punishing them in the severest manner, while others who promoted his interest, promised themselves too much. However, Cæsar's abilities were even as great as his clemency, and his knowledge of mankind seemed to be as extensive as his conquests. He generously pardoned all those who had taken up arms against him, he enlarged the number of senators, but at the same time left them no more than an empty name. He rebuilt Carthage and Corinth, to each of which he sent colonies, and caused some of the most magnificent structures to be erected in Rome, so that the city assumed a degree of splendour far superior to what had been known in former times. Nothing could set bounds to his ambition, for the further he extended his conquests, the more he seemed to covet, and he even projected the conquest of the Parthians, because they had put Crassus to death, by pouring melted gold down his throat, as the reward of his insatiable avarice.

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As the greatest part of the senate was attached to him from motives of interest, and as they had only the shadow of power, so it is not to be wondered that they bestowed upon him the most flattering encomiums. His statue was set up in most of the cities in the empire, and so far did they proceed in adulation, that they proposed ranking him among the gods. Such in general are the extremes that men run into.

But notwithstanding these flatteries, and many others, too fulsome to be mentioned, a conspiracy was secretly forming against them by a few malecontents, who envied his power, while they admired his talents. At the head of this conspiracy was Brutus, a young man whom Cæsar had treated with the greatest tenderness, and Cassius, whom he had pardoned after the battle of Pharsalia. Cassius was a vain haughty man, proud of what he thought superior merit, and from motives of private resentment, an enemy to Cæsar. On the other hand, Brutus loved Cæsar from motives of gratitude, but his stoical pride made him prefer the antient government of Rome to any new form whatever. In vain did Cæsar continue to heap favours upon him; he was descended from that Brutus who expelled Tarquin, and as he inherited his spirit, so he resolved to follow his example.

There is something like infatuation attends those who are devoted to destruction, and it often happens that even the best advice is considered as an idle tale. The conspiracy against Cæsar, although deeply laid, was not so secretly carried on, but notice of it began to transpire, at least among individuals. His most faithful friends advised him not to venture to the senate at the time he had appointed, but Cæsar thought his remaining at home would

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indicate cowardice, and cause him to be looked upon with contempt.

Regardless, therefore, of all the intimations that had been given him, he set out for the senate, and in his way thither, was met by Artemidorus, a Grecian philosopher, who gave him a paper containing an account of the conspiracy, but Cæsar, without so much as looking at it, gave it into the hands of his secretary, who put it among other things. At the door of the senate-house, he was met by Spurina, one of the augurs, who had foretold his death, and Cæsar looking at him, said, “ Spurina, the ides of march are come.” “ Yes, (said the other) but “ they are not yet past.” Having taken his seat in the senate, he began in the most unconcerned manner to propose something for their deliberation, but his doom was fixed, and the conspirators had secretly armed themselves for the purpose.

Cimber, one of the senators, approached him in the most supplicant manner, pretending to intercede for his brother, who had been banished, and while he was on his knees before Cæsar, Casca, one of the conspirators, stabbed him in the shoulder, while Cassius wounded him in the face. The intrepid hero finding that the conspirators had devoted him to destruction, resolved to sell his life as dear as possible, but seeing Brutus among them, he called out, “ And you too my son;” upon which he threw his robe over his head, and fell down covered with three and twenty wounds, from the hands of those who had been raised to honour by his generosity. Such was the end of Julius Cæsar, in the fifty-sixth year of his age, and after he had subdued a great part of the world. He has been accused by some historians, as one whose sole ambition was to enslave

his country, and upon its ruins establish his own grandeur. But in my opinion this is rather saying too much, for when he first entered upon public business, good fortune continued to attend him in so rapid a manner, that he gradually rose to power before he was acquainted with the nature of it. Self-preservation must have led him on to action, and it is evident that he and Pompey could not reign together in the same empire. Cæsar, therefore, was obliged to set himself above the laws, in order to prevent his being punished by them. The assassinating of princes is one of those convulsions in the state that generally brings along with it a great number of evils, and in the end either reduces all things to confusion, or restores order by a change of government.

No sooner was the news of Cæsar's death known in the city, than the people flocked together in crowds, while Brutus, with the other conspirators, fortified themselves in the capitol, resolving to defend it to the last extremity. In the mean time, such as were the friends of Cæsar, resolved to possess themselves of his power, among whom was Mark Antony, a man well acquainted with the art of war, but a slave to such vices as are inconsistent with the character of a hero. He had associated himself with Lepidus, a general who loved intrigues, and having convened the senate, a proposal was made to enquire into Cæsar's late conduct. This was violently opposed by those whom he had raised to grandeur, because they knew that if he was declared an usurper, all acts or grants made by him in favour of them would be void. In such a dilemma, it was resolved upon, that all those concerned in the conspiracy against Cæsar, should receive a free pardon, and such acts as had been made by him

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him should be confirmed. By a method so prudent, his enemies endeavoured to save themselves, and his friends to enjoy their estates without molestation.

Antony was so much vexed at the decree of the senate, that he resolved to acquire by deceit what he could not under the forms of law. He had possessed himself of Cæsar's papers, and bribed his secretary to insert such things in them as seemed to favour his intended design. He caused Cæsar's will to be read to the people, and in it was found an order to distribute great part of his treasures among them, and that Octavius, his sister's grandson, should succeed him in the government. Interest operates strongly on the mind, and as Antony was no stranger to the dispositions of the people, he resolved to address himself to their passions.

Having assembled them together in the forum, he shewed them the bloody robe in which Cæsar had been murdered, and used the most inflammatory expressions in order to stir them up against the conspirators. He even invoked the gods to assist him, upon which all the people cried out, that the murder of one whom they looked upon as their father, should not go unrevenged. The soldiers who had fought under Cæsar, ran to his funeral pile, and threw into the fire every piece of armour they had about them, and the women rose in multitudes, and set fire to the houses of the conspirators. Happy were such of the most obnoxious who could save themselves by flight, for so great was the rage of the people, that they bore down all opposition before them.

So far Antony succeeded, and in order to continue in power, he resolved to keep on the best terms with the populace. But while he was endeavouring to make himself as absolute as Cæsar, divisions took place

place among the citizens, and many of them began to espouse the cause of Octavius, afterwards called Augustus, who has been already mentioned as the grand nephew of Julius. When Cæsar was murdered, Augustus was at Apollonia, to which place he had been sent to learn the philosophy of the Greeks, for he was then only about eighteen years of age. He imagined that Antony, consistent with his professions of friendship to his uncle, would espouse his cause, and enable him to obtain possession of the throne which he looked upon as his inheritance. Accordingly, he set out for Rome, where the people treated him with that respect due to his rank, but Antony, who considered him as an obstacle to his ambition, refused him a share of the treasure that had been left by his uncle. By a generosity like that of Cæsar, the young prince endeared himself every day more and more to the people, for to the most handsome figure, he joined such a winning address, that every one looked upon him with admiration, while the affairs of Antony, who was obliged to keep a guard to protect his person, were every day becoming more and more perplexed.

To increase the difference between the contending parties, the soldiers who had served under Cæsar, declared in favour of his nephew, and each party resolved to take the field. The conspirators naturally attempted to provide for their own safety, while Augustus and Antony both sought in their turn to place themselves on the seat of royal authority. Antony procured for himself the government of that part of Italy called Cisalpine, to which he marched with as many of the soldiers as he could persuade to join his standard, and having besieged Brutus in the city of Mutina, sent an account of it

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to the senate at Rome, pretending not to proceed any further till he had received orders in what manner he was to act.

In the mean time, Augustus brought over the great orator Cicero to his interest, who harangued with such force of eloquence in his behalf to the senate, that Antony was commanded to return from Mutina to the banks of the Rubicon, and there to wait for further orders. Anthony, who had been filled with hopes of succeeding Cæsar in the government, paid no regard to the order of the senate, upon which he was declared an enemy to the state, and Augustus was desired to march against him with such forces as were attached to his interest, a measure he was the more willing to comply with, as he imagined it would enable him to obtain possession of the throne.

Pansa and Hirrius, the two consuls, assisted him, and both armies, after skirmishing some time, came to a general engagement, in which Antony was defeated, but both the consuls were mortally wounded. Augustus now thought himself sure of victory, but Pansa, while he lay expiring of his wounds, sent for him, and desired him to join his forces to those of Antony, because the senate had nothing further in view but that of weakening both parties, in order to regain the power they had lost.

However unwilling Augustus was to comply with the request of the dying consul, yet necessity forced him to it after he found that the senate had done all they could to disconcert his measures, and mortify his ambition. Accordingly he made proposals to Antony and his lieutenant Lepidus, which were readily agreed to, and the three commanders marched towards Rome, at the head of seventeen legions. As soon as the senate heard that the army was marching

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marching to the city, they honoured Augustus with the consulship, and no sooner had he taken possession of his new dignity, than he procured an edict to banish Brutus and Cassius as the murderers of Caesar, and as enemies to the commonwealth of Rome, their native city.

But still Augustus could place no confidence in the senate, and therefore he went to meet Anthony and Lepidus at Mutina, where he learned that Decimus Brutus had been taken prisoner, and put to death. Whatever disputes had formerly taken place between these three generals, all animosities seemed now to be buried in oblivion, for they embraced each other in the most affectionate manner. The spirit of liberty, that had so long distinguished the Roman republic, and raised the people to the highest state of grandeur, seemed now to be extinguished, for there these men agreed upon dividing the empire among them in the following manner.

Italy with all the provinces in the east, were to remain the common property of the triumvirate, till the senate should be subdued, so that each party had an equality to claim. Africa, with such islands as had been conquered in the Mediterranean, were allotted to Augustus. Lepidus had Spain for his share, and Antony made choice of Gaul. It was also agreed at the same time, that all their enemies should be proscribed, and that no mercy should be shewn them. This was one of the most horrid and unnatural resolutions that had ever been formed, for during the contests that had taken place, people often embraced different interests, from no other motives but those of self-preservation.

In consequence of a resolution so truly diabolical, Rome exhibited one universal scene of murder and bloodshed. Besides two thousand knights and three hundred

hundred senators, who were murdered in cool blood, scarce one family escaped the rage of the assassins, who seemed to have divested themselves of those feelings that are the ornament of human nature.

Among those who had been marked out for destruction, was the celebrated Cicero, who had carried the Roman eloquence to the highest pitch, and who still remains an object of admiration to the learned world. When Cicero heard that his country was on the brink of destruction, he left his place of retirement in order to make his escape from Italy, but the winds proving unfavourable, he was again driven on shore, and forced to take shelter in a wood. There he was forced by a party of Antony's men commanded by Pompilius Lenus, a tribune of the army, who cut off his hands and head, and carried them to Rome, for which he received a valuable present from Antony, who ordered the sacred remains of the greatest man of his age, to be fixed upon the rostrum. Such was the end of Cicero, in the sixty-third year of his age, and notwithstanding his having fallen a sacrifice to a combined set of ruffians, yet his name will be admired as long as the Latin language is read, or true elegance taught as a rational science.

Rome being in a manner reduced to ruin, such of the inhabitants as desired to save their lives or preserve their liberty, left Italy, and follow Brutus and Cassius, who were then in Asia. Both these conspirators had for some time acted singly in their own defence, but at last finding their armies encrease they met at Smyrna, where they made a most formidable appearance, for Brutus, notwithstanding the ferocity of his manners, yet did every thing in his power to endear himself to the soldiers. While

While they were at Smyrna, they received information that Augustus and Antony were both marching against them, and that Cleopatra, whom Cæsar had placed on the throne of Egypt, had also determined in favour of their enemies. In such extremity, Brutus proposed marching to Greece, but Cassius differing from him in opinion, it was agreed that they should attack the Rhodians, and the Lycians, in order to prevent their giving any assistance to their enemies.

Accordingly, they proceeded upon that expedition, and having subdued the Rhodians, Brutus attacked the city of Xanthius in Licia, which he reduced to the utmost distress, and the people resolving to sell their lives as dear as possible, did all they could to oppose the besiegers, and then set fire to their houses, and voluntarily perished in the flames. Brutus did all he could to save them, but his utmost efforts proved abortive, for only one hundred and fifty escaped the conflagration.

LETTER XXXIX.

THE critical situation of their affairs induced Brutus and Cassius to meet once more at Sardis, where they mutually upbraided each other, for their bad success had made them in a manner desperate. Their friends prevented them from coming to any extremity in their disputes, and after the evening had been spent in the most seemingly friendly manner, they each retired to their tents. But Brutus, who had the interest of the republic at heart, though not power to save it from slavery, imagined that he saw an apparition, while he was reading by a lamp. Not however in the least intimidated,

timidated, he called out, "What god or devil art thou?" to which the apparition answered, "I am thy evil genius, and will meet thee again at Philippia;" "Meet me there," (said Brutus) and then it vanished from his sight. I have related this on the authority of Plutarch, and leave you to judge of it, in the mean time, delivering it as my opinion that the apparition was no more than the effect of his distempered imagination.

The forces of Augustus had now advanced to Philippia, and Brutus and Cassius marched thither to meet them. The army of Augustus was rather more numerous than that of Brutus and Cassius, but as the empire of the world depended upon the success of the battle, each party resolved to despise it to the last. Brutus and Cassius had encamped their armies on two hills that rose at the two extremities of a plain, taking care to secure the intermediate space, lest they should be separated, while their enemies lay in an extended plain opposite to them, waiting with the utmost impatience to engage.

In the mean time, the soldiers under the command of Antony, got behind Cassius, in order to cut off his retreat, so that there seemed an absolute necessity of coming to a general engagement. Cassius had delivered it as his opinion, that the best thing that could be done, was to distress the enemy in detached parties, but Brutus differed from him in his sentiments, declaring that if he was deserted, he would lay violent hands on himself, as Cato had done before. Cassius acquiesced with him, and embracing him, said, "He was determined to do the same," consistent with his philosophical notions, for he was a professed Epicurean. Some days before the battle, Augustus had been seized with a severe illness, so that the command devolved

devolved upon Antony, who having made every proper disposition for obtaining victory, attacked the entrenchments of Cassius with great fury.

Brutus behaved with great valour, but Cassius was totally routed, after he had done every thing to make his men resume the charge. Titinius, a lieutenant, was sent out to inform Brutus of the dishonour, and he falling in with a party that Brutus had sent to assist Cassius, tarried so long with them, that upon his return, he found his general dead in his tent. Such was the end of Cassius, who imagining that the party sent to his assistance were enemies, had got Pindarus, one of his freed men, to kill him. Brutus being informed of the defeat of Cassius, rallied such of the scattered forces as he could bring into order, but he found his power on the decline, for the soldiers became mutinous, and treated their general with every mark of disrespect.

After the defeat of Cassius, both armies had continued harrassing each other twenty days, but at last a second engagement became in a manner inevitable. The army of Brutus was now much dispirited, for his enemies having out-flanked him, attacked him in the rear with such fury, that a general rout ensued, and the brother of Cassius, with the son of Cato, being killed, Brutus resolved to save himself by flight. It is probable his natural courage had forsaken him, otherwise, consistent with his well-known inflexibility, he would rather have lost his life, than leave the field of battle in the manner he did.

Brutus was considered by Augustus as so formidable a rival, that the whole army were commanded to take him dead or alive. Lucilius, the friend of Brutus, seeing his general in such danger, went boldly forward to meet a body of Thracian horse, and

and told them he was Brutus, upon which he was taken prisoner, and news thereof dispatched to Antony. Antony went out to receive his prisoner, but so much was he surprised at the fidelity of Lucilius, that he pardoned him and admitted him among the number of his friends. Brutus, who by the fidelity and almost unexampled generosity of Lucilius, had an opportunity of making his escape, travelled all night, and concealing himself under a rock, looked up to heaven, and said, “O virtue, “I worshipped thee as a substantial good, but I find “thou art an empty name.” As he knew that the conqueror would shew him no mercy, he desired Strato, who had taught him oratory, to kill him, but he refused, upon which he made the same request to one of his slaves, but Strato calling out that Brutus should never die by the hands of a slave, held out the point of his sword, and Brutus with an intrepidity peculiar to himself, fell upon it, and died.

Such was the fate of Brutus, a man of great courage, and the most uncorrupted integrity, but in his manner rather sour than engaging; for like Cato, he seemed to prefer the rigorous letter of the law, to its mild and amiable spirit. He was an enemy to tyranny as vested in a single person, without reflecting that the confusion that had taken place in Rome, rendered it in a manner necessary that a new form of government should be made choice of.

The death of Brutus opened the eyes of the people, for they then began to see, that the design of the triumviri was to set up as separate tyrants, and share the government between them. In this however, they were all agreed, namely, to punish with the utmost severity, those who had taken up arms against

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against them, and therefore having put many of the chief senators to death, they ordered the head of Brutus to be thrown at the foot of Cæsar's statue, and when news thereof were brought to his wife Portia, the daughter of Cato, she, like her father, laid violent hands on herself. In a word, so great was the cruelty they exercised to their unhappy prisoners, that their bodies were thrown to the dogs, and their houses destroyed.

It is now necessary that we should attend to the character and conduct of the triumvirate, after they became possessed of power, for it is natural to suppose that it could not be of long duration. Antony, ever vain of what he supposed superior abilities, went first to Greece, and then to Asia, indulging himself in all sorts of sensuality, while he seemed in that part of the world to enjoy sovereign authority, so effeminate were the people, and so ready to flatter him rather than defend their natural rights and privileges. But he had a weak side which these effeminate people easily discerned, and in the end he fell a sacrifice to his pleasures.

Voluptuous in every part of his life, and a slave to those passions that are inconsistent with the character of a true hero, he was ready to sacrifice every thing for the enjoyment of the fair sex. Accordingly, in the course of his journey, he engaged in several intrigues, and at last hearing that Cleopatra, queen of Egypt, was the most celebrated beauty in her time, he resolved to visit her. But then it occurred to him, that it would be much better to meet her as an enemy than a friend, so that a pretext was only wanting. Pretexts, however, are soon found by those who want to gratify their passions.

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Seropion, whom Cleopatra had appointed governor of the island of Cyprus, had furnished the conspirators with provisions to carry on the war against the triumviri, and as he alledged that it had been done by order of his queen, she was summoned to answer for her breach of fidelity to the Roman republic.

Cleopatra, who was no stranger to the force of her charms, nor unacquainted with the character of Antony, entered on board a ship in the river Cydnus, in order to meet him at Tarsus in Cilicia. No sooner had her barge made its appearance, than Anthony was struck with its splendour, but much more so with the queen, whose age at that time was only twenty-seven. That she might rivet him the more strongly in the fetters of love, she contrived to make her appearance in the most engaging manner, or rather in such a manner as is inconsistent with modesty to relate, vice having taken place of virtue, and obscenity of decency and modesty.

Her success was equal to the boldest wishes she could form, and Antony being captivated with her charms, gave himself up to all manner of luxury. In the mean time, Augustus, who had formed more ambitious and more noble views than to repose himself in the arms of a harlot, resolved to ingratiate himself with the Roman people, by bestowing upon the soldiers such lands as were necessary for their subsistence. This brought vast crowds of people together to implore his clemency, and among the rest was the famous Publius Virgilius Maro, on whom the conqueror bestowed the inheritance of his ancestors. But new dissensions broke out, and Augustus found it more difficult to obtain the sovereignty of Rome, than he had at first imagined. Antony was then in Egypt with Cleopatra,

opatra, and his wife Luculla, being fired with jealousy, spirited up her brother Lucius to oppose Augustus. This occasioned a new war, but Lucius being reduced by famine in the city of Perusia, was obliged to surrender, and Augustus generously pardoned him, after which the conqueror returned to Rome in triumph. Fulvia, the wife of Anthony, was obliged to leave Italy, and take refuge in Athens, and her husband having been informed of the designs of Augustus, put to sea with a great fleet, in order to oppose his fortunate competitor. He met Fulvia at Athens, but she was then sinking under a load of infirmities, and soon after died, while he again embodied his men, and met Augustus at Brundusium in Italy.

Anthony was joined by Pompeius, but those who wished well to the interest of the commonwealth, did all in their power to bring about a reconciliation between the contending parties. A reconciliation took place, and a new partition of the empire was made in the following manner. Africa was given to Lepidus, the west to Augustus, the east to Anthony, and Pompeius was to enjoy Peloponessus, with all the conquests that he had made. Anthony marched his forces into the east, where he obtained some signal victories over the Parthians, while Augustus took care of the provinces in Gaul, but Pompeius having refused to comply with some proposals made him by Anthony, a rupture took place between them. Anthony, whose ambition was equal to any person's whatever, sent a fleet of ships to the assistance of Augustus, who had resolved to abridge the power of Pompeius, and although for some time he had but indifferent success, yet his perseverance was such, that he never despaired of one day making himself master of the empire. He gave the command of his fleet to Agrippa, who de-

feated Pompey, so that he was obliged to seek protection from Anthony, whom he knew to be his enemy, but before he could have an opportunity of seeing him, he was taken prisoner by one of Anthony's lieutenants, who ordered him to be put to death, as an enemy to his master.

Pompey being thus defeated and slain, and his men dispersed, Augustus thought it would not be a difficult matter to destroy the rest of the confederates in the same manner. Lepidus had made an irruption into the island of Scilly, under pretence that he was deprived of his share in government, but he had lost the confidence of his soldiers, who had been bribed by persons appointed for that purpose by Augustus.

In the mean time Augustus prepared to meet him, but when he arrived in Sicily, he found him too contemptible to contend with. Accordingly, with the most undaunted resolution, Augustus went in person to the camp of Lepidus, where a centurion attempted to kill him, but the soldiers who loved him for his unexampled bounty, crowded round him in great numbers, declaring that they were willing to follow him wherever he went. Upon that, Augustus took up one of the eagles or ensigns in his hand, and having waved it in the air, almost the whole army saluted him with shouts of acclamation. This was just what Augustus expected from the previous methods he had used to corrupt the soldiers, and Lepidus was obliged to come as an humble suppliant before him to beg his life. Augustus was too generous to put him to death, and therefore having banished him to Circæum, an obscure place, he spent the remainder of his days there, under all the mortifying thoughts that arise from disappointed ambition.

The person who acquires power by conquest, will be procuring many friends, while the thought-

less crowd will flatter his vanity with all the giddy signs of the most changeable dispositions. Thus when Augustus returned to Rome from conquering Lepidus, the senators with all the citizens met him, and bestowed almost as much flattery upon him as if he had been a god. He was still sensible, however, that while Antony was at the head of an army, he could not call himself emperor, but so fertile was his genius, that he did not despair of serving him in the same manner he had done the others. Antony was still in the east, and having met with several considerable losses, Augustus caused a report to be spread, that he had become too effeminate ever to conduct an army with prudence. Indeed, this report was in some measure true, for Cleopatra, in whose company he spent most of his time, had made him so uxorious, that he seemed regardless of any thing that concerned the army. To every act of the most luxurious sensuality, he added such folly as is scarce to be paralleled in history. He gave her the kingdoms of Syria, Cyprus, Judea, Cilicia, and many other places, and upon two sons which he had by her, he bestowed the title of kings. Such extravagant acts of folly, unbecoming the dignity of a hero, exasperated the Romans to such a height, that they could set no bounds to their resentment. Antony hearing that Augustus was raising an army against him, ordered Canidius, his general, to march towards Europe, while he followed with Cleopatra.

From the account of Antony's luxurious way of living, even in the camp, when on the eve of a decisive engagement, one would imagine that he had forgot every part of that character for which he had been so distinguished, when he defeated Brutus and Cassius, so fatal are the effect of female charms

upon the conduct of military commanders. However, there was an absolute necessity that war should be declared in form, which was accordingly done, and both armies began to make the necessary preparations for a battle. The army commanded by Antony, was composed of forces drawn from such countries as he had conquered in the east, and that under Augustus, of such as had long fought under his standard in different parts of the west. Antony, besides an army of upwards of one hundred thousand men, had a fleet of five hundred ships, but although neither the army nor the navy of Augustus were so numerous, yet his men had been much better disciplined, and longer accustomed to war. Indeed, both the armies and the fleets were so numerous, that it might well have been said, that they were contending for the empire of the world. The benevolent, however, looked with contempt, and even detestation on the most dignified conquerors, who seemed to be not better than scourges in the hands of Divine Providence to punish guilty nations. The names of many good persons, who governed as the fathers of their people, were now forgotten, while those who wasted whole nations, and murdered innumerable thousands of their innocent fellow-creatures, are by too many considered as heroes.

Both the fleets came to an engagement at Actium, a city of Epirus, and for a considerable time they fought with all the ardour of men who were determined either to conquer or die. For some time the ships in Antony's fleet seemed to have the advantage, and probably they might have obtained it, had not his fatality in his attachment to Cleopatra hastened on his ruin. About five o'clock in the evening, news was brought to Antony in his ship, that Cleopatra

Cleopatra had fled with about fifty ships, and Antony, regardless of his honour, interest, or safety, fled after her, while his whole fleet fell into the hands of Augustus, so that there remained nothing to make the victory decisive, but that of coming to a general engagement with the forces who were drawn up near the shore opposite to each other. But that was soon effected, for within four days after the naval engagement, Antony's men laid down their arms, and submitted to the conqueror.

In the mean time Antony followed Cleopatra, and getting into the galley, where she sat, remained three days in silent melancholy, without speaking a word. At last, he received the fatal account that his army had forsaken him, upon which, after attempting to kill himself, he set sail for Alexandria, where he arrived overwhelmed with grief, and almost in a state of despair. All that was now left for him to do, was to take care of Egypt, by raising forces with the money he found in Cleopatra's treasury, and by prevailing on her to remain with him, for she had formed a scheme of crossing the Red Sea, in order to save herself from the Romans, from whom she expected no mercy.

This celebrated queen was now arrived at an age, when female charms make but a faint impression; but so vain are women, that they often think to be held in the same degree of admiration at forty as twenty. From the whole of her conduct, she seems to have been as destitute of sincerity as of modesty, nor does it appear that she ever had any further regard for Antony, than the love of power, which he bestowed upon her in the most profuse manner.

As it could not be supposed that Antony could long keep possession of Egypt against the power of Augustus, so he made proposals to him, desiring

that he would only spare his life, and he would never give him any further disturbance. In the mean time Cleopatra sent private messengers to Augustus, telling him that she was ready to resign her crown, upon condition he would take her and her children under his protection. Augustus gave her the most solemn promise, that nothing should be done to hurt her, upon condition that she would deliver up Antony, or cause him to be murdered in what manner she thought proper. Some of Anthony's friends received notice of this secret negotiation, upon which he was fired with jealousy and resentment, against a woman who had promoted his ruin. Cleopatra's design was to try whether she could not captivate the heart of Augustus, and for some time Antony shut himself up in a solitary retreat, but hearing that she was negotiating with one Thrysus, whom Augustus had sent to Alexandria for that purpose, he broke out into the most ungovernable fury, having caused Thrysus to be scourged in the most shameful and cruel manner, and then sent him to the camp of Augustus. As he had thus committed so gross a breach of the laws of nations, Augustus, who ought not, consistent with the dignity of his character, to have taken such a mean revenge, ordered Hiparchus, Antony's ambassador, to be punished in the same manner.

As Augustus had determined not to return to Italy, till he had subdued Egypt, he sent Gallus, his lieutenant, before him, who took Paretonium, and Antony marching to its relief, thought to have caused a mutiny among the legions of the enemy, by reminding them of his generosity when they fought under him, but he was prevented from being heard by Gallus's commanding all the trumpets in the army to sound. But what was still more mortifying

mortifying to Antony, he received news that the strong town of Plusium had been given up to Augustus, and that the conqueror was on his march to Alexandria.

Antony considered himself as under an absolute necessity of making one vigorous effort, especially as a small body of his cavalry had defeated some of the advanced guards of Augustus, and therefore he prepared to bring together all the men that he could raise, and all the ships he could fit out. He sent a challenge to Augustus to fight him in single combat, but the young conqueror had more prudence than to engage on such unequal terms. At the same time he told the messenger to inform Antony, that there were many ways for him to die without engaging in single combat, intimating thereby that he might imitate the conduct of Brutus and Cassius, whom he had defeated at Phillipi.

We have now followed Antony through a long series of victories, we have beheld his rise and decline, and now we shall usher him off from the stage of this world, where had he acted with as much innocence as grandeur, had he been as eager to practice virtue as acquire fame, he would perhaps not have made such a figure in history. Finding that he could no longer delay coming to a general engagement, he spent the evening before with some of his friends, and in the morning went to take a view of his army, which was drawn up on an eminence near the city. He sent orders to his fleet to attack that of the enemy, but how great was his confusion when he saw them join themselves to those of Augustus. The small party of horse that he had raised, deserted him at the same time, and although he made a feeble effort with the foot, yet they were soon disordered, and most of them made prisoners.

All hopes now forsaking him, he returned to the city, and vented his rage against Cleopatra in the bitterest terms, charging her with having betrayed him to his enemies. Whatever truth might be in that, certain it is, that Cleopatra was afraid of his resentment, and therefore she shut herself up in a tomb near the temple of Isis, where she concealed her treasure. She also ordered, that it should be given out that she was dead, which so affected Antony, that he lamented her fate in the bitterest manner. He then ordered Aros, one of his freed men, to kill him; but the faithful servant drawing the sword, plunged it into his own bosom, and fell dead on the spot, chusing rather to die than to murder his master, who had always treated him in the most generous manner.

Antony beheld the fidelity of his slave for some time with silent admiration mixed with horror, and then drawing out the sword, plunged it in his own bosom. For some time he remained speechless, but at last recovering himself a little, he called out to his servants to put an end to his misery. This frightened them so much, that they all ran away, leaving him in the most inexpressible agonies, till news was brought that Cleopatra was still alive, and then he desired to be carried to her. This they complied with, but when they came to the gate of the sepulchre, she refused to open it. However, they flung ropes down to have him hoisted up, bloody as he was. She treated him in the most tender manner, and he begging for a glass of wine, in order to hasten his end, entreated her to save her life on any terms whatever. Having uttered these words, he expired in the arms of Cleopatra, whose charms co-operating with his own passions, had promoted his ruin.

Augustus

Augustus having heard that Cleopatra was shut up in the tomb, sent Procullus to her, with a view of procuring her treasure, but she refused him admittance, upon which, while she was conferring with one of his attendants through the grate, Procullus got in at one of the windows, accompanied by two more, which Cleopatra seeing, would have stabbed herself, had they not prevented her, by wresting the dagger out of her hand. At the same time, he examined every place within the tomb, and removed what he thought she might make use of to destroy herself, and then leaving her to her own melancholy reflections, returned to the camp to inform Augustus, who waited for him with the utmost impatience, not doubting but Cleopatra would grace his triumph.

When Augustus had received the intelligence brought him by Procullus, he enjoyed the utmost satisfaction, and gave orders that Antony should be buried in a manner suitable to his rank. He likewise ordered her to be brought to the palace, and treated with the utmost respect, but her melancholy preyed upon her spirits, and for some time she refused to take any sustenance. Her design was to have starved herself to death, but Augustus caused it to be intimated to her, that if she did so, he would withdraw his protection from her children. Mutual tenderness took place of every other consideration, and she resolved to take whatever was prescribed for her by the physicians. To impress the inhabitants of Alexandria with terror, and at the same time procure from them that homage he had so long wished for, Augustus made a most magnificent entry into that celebrated city, where he was treated with all sorts of flattery and adulation, but his triumph was disgraced, by causing Cesario, the son of

Cæsar, and Antyllus, the son of Antony, both by Cleopatra, to be put to death. This was an act of cruelty, for which no excuse can be pleaded, for generosity is the greatest virtue that can be found in the breast of a conqueror. Clemency and moderation are more illustrious in a hero, who has subdued nations, than the greatest glare of power, for by that they convince the conquered that they can triumph over their own passions. The love of a conquered people is a better guard for a conqueror than the army, by which his laurels were acquired, for cruelty is sure to create hatred.

LETTER XL.

AS soon as Augustus had restored the peace of the city, and given orders concerning such things as were necessary, he returned to visit Cleopatra, whom he found drowned in tears. Some traces of her former beauty were still discernable through the veil of grief, but like the setting sun, they were too weak to attract the attention, and much less to engage the heart.

She fell on her knees before him, but he raised her up, upon which a dawn of hope revived her spirits, till finding Augustus inflexible, she reminded him of Cæsar's clemency, and the many acts of generosity he had shewn her. There is perhaps nothing makes a more easy impression on the mind than the tears and entreaties of a woman in distress, but Augustus was too well convinced of female perfidy to put any confidence in what she said. He knew that Antony had hastened his ruin by his attachment to her, and therefore he considered it his undoubted interest not to be taken in the same snare. Her riches

riches were all delivered up to Augustus, except a few jewels, and he assuring her that her life should be spared, left her to the care of some of his officers, his whole design being to make her a trophy of his victories. However, as she had some suspicions of what he intended to do, and as one Dolabella, a young Roman, whom she had corrupted, informed her that she and her children were in a few days to be sent prisoners to Rome, she resolved to put an end to her own life.

Previous to her putting her horrid resolution in practice, she desired that she might be permitted to visit the tomb of Antony, and being carried thither, she flung herself upon his ashes, determining that she would not survive one who had been so long dear to her, and who had shared with her both in prosperity and adversity. Having given a vent to her grief, she returned to the place of her confinement, which was the palace of Augustus, and ordered that a sumptuous entertainment should be got ready. She then dressed herself in the most elegant manner, and having eat as usual, ordered every one to retire, except her two female attendants, Iris and Charmion. A basket of fruit had been, by her order, conveyed into her apartment, and in it was an asp concealed in such a manner, that none could know of it but herself and her women.

Every thing being now ready, she wrote a letter to Augustus, desiring that she might be buried along with Antony, and then letting the asp sting her bosom, she sunk down on the couch, and died. When Augustus received her letter, he sent messengers to prevent her from putting her design in execution, but too late; for when they arrived, they found her lying in the royal robes, and Charmion, and Iris, who had followed her example, after putting the

the diadem on the head of their royal mistress, fell down dead by the side of the couch.

Such was the end of Cleopatra, the last remaining branch of the kings of Egypt, and with her fell a monarchy that had continued to flourish from the most early ages, and whose sovereigns had performed as great actions as any we find mentioned in history. In a public character, she seems to have been destitute of every principle of sincerity, nor did she consider the breach of the most solemn treaties as a crime. Ambitious, revengeful and cruel, she thought no crimes too great by which she could establish her power, and support her grandeur. In her private character she had divested herself of modesty, nor in the gratification of her passions, could she taste those pleasures that flow from virtuous love. There is not perhaps in the universe any one character so bad, as not to have some spark of virtue remaining, and yet we meet with some whose vices are of so enormous and complicated a nature, that if any virtue remains, they are totally obscured. This last seems to have been the character of Cleopatra, for we can only find two things that seems to give the least extenuation to her guilt. She had been brought up in the midst of civil dissensions, and consequently often in danger of her life. This might give her mind a ferocious turn, which a variety of events contributed towards the improvement of. Her dangers obliged her to call her charms to her assistance, and they completed her ruin.

According to the dying request of Cleopatra, her remains were deposited beside those of Antony, for although Augustus was not a little disappointed that he could not grace his triumph with the queen of Egypt, yet as the manner of her death was in high esteem among the Romans, the honour of a funeral

was

was granted to her, and her two faithful companions, who had each laid violent hands on themselves.

Antony being now no more, and all the other pretenders to the sovereignty cut off, Augustus settled the affairs of Egypt, and then began to revolve in his own mind whether he should restore Rome to its antient grandeur, or establish himself absolute sovereign. To settle a matter of such importance was extremely difficult, for the examples of several others who had gone before him, such as Sylla and Cæsar, made a deep impression on his mind. He knew that the Roman empire was now advanced to such a state of grandeur, and their conquests so extensive, that it would require the most undaunted courage, the most consummate prudence, and the most inflexible perseverance to govern it. He was not destitute of ambition, but still he thought the task of so important a nature, that he would not engage in any thing without the advice of his faithful friends Mæcenas and Agrippa, whom he had always treated with the utmost respect, and to whose opinions he paid the greatest deference.

As it often happens in such cases where a thing of importance is referred to two friends, they generally differ in their opinions, although the motives may remain in secret. Agrippa advised him to restore the power of the senate, possibly in order to aggrandize himself, but he was opposed by Mæcenas, who said all he could, in order to persuade Augustus not to give up that power which he had acquired with so much toil. The reasons, urged by Mæcenas, were, consistent with the ambitious views formed by Augustus, and therefore he resolved to take the government upon himself.

From

From this circumstance we need not be surprised that Augustus esteemed Mæcenas ever after, by honouring him with a large share of his friendship. Indeed, their tempers in private life were very much alike; for although Augustus was brave in the field, yet he was no stranger to pleasure when the toils of the camp were over. Mæcenas was one who had studied the fine arts, and was a patron of learned men, but he loved pleasure rather than virtue, and was not averse to flattery. He seems to have been one of those ministers who take pleasure in distributing the prince's favours to those who could produce any thing fine, but it does not appear that solid knowledge, accompanied with utility, could ever merit his attention, and probably, because he was no judge of true merit.

Under the influence of this minister, and particularly guided by his instructions, Augustus assumed the imperial authority, and by all the arts that he was master of, endeavoured to make himself as popular on the throne as he had been in the field. He pretended to confirm the power of the three estates, namely, the senate, the army, and the people, but at the same time took care that nothing but a shadow of power should reign with them, for he placed himself at the head of each, so that nothing could be done until his approbation was first obtained. So powerful is art in some princes, and so tamely do the people submit to slavery, after they have been harrassed with all the horrors of a civil war. Every title that could flatter his vanity, or contribute towards making his power absolute, was conferred upon him, and the people seemed now to court slavery as much as their fathers had opposed it.

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That nothing might be wanting to secure his popularity, he caused many new laws to be enacted, all tending to refine the manners of the people, so that the Romans, who had been long accustomed to war, began to relish the sweets of peace, and to wish for a continuance of it. Their former barbarity had in a great measure been nourished by the shews of gladiators, but Augustus ordered that these shews should only be exhibited twice in the year, nor should they begin to fight till they received the absolute orders of the senate for that purpose, for he thought it consistent with his own safety to treat the senators with the greatest respect.

Certain it is, that no prince could have done more to ingratiate himself with his subjects than Augustus, for all ranks of people were admitted to his presence, and he heard their complaints with the greatest condescension. In the mean time, he never offered to interfere with the course of justice, unless it appeared to him that the laws had been stretched beyond their proper bounds, and then in such cases he would submit to become an advocate for the injured party, well-knowing that his presence would plead more powerfully than his eloquence. There are many instances of his clemency recorded in the writings of the classic authors, and although some of them may seem to have been exaggerated, yet there is no doubt but many of the accounts are true. An old soldier, who had served him many years in the wars, presented him a petition relating to a suit that he had depending in the senate, upon which the emperor desired him to go and hire an advocate. "Alas, (said the soldier) I fought for you in person, and not by proxy, at the battle of Actium." Augustus was so struck with his honest simplicity, that he went and pleaded his cause.

cause for him in person. Indeed, there seemed to be a total change in his natural temper, for he took pleasure in pardoning such as conspired against him, and to secure their friendship for the future, often heaped great favours upon them.

But while he cultivated the arts of peace in Rome, he did not neglect to take care of the most distant provinces in the empire. Tiberius subdued the Ceretebrians in Spain, and forced them to submit to such terms as he thought proper. Lollius drove such of the Germans out of Gaul as had crossed the Rhine, and penetrated into that province, while Piso, who commanded in Pamphylio, drove many barbarous nations back to their own country, who had penetrated into Thrace. Caius, the grandson of Augustus, defeated the Dacians, and put many of them to the sword. In Dalmatia, the people who had never been thoroughly brought under the Roman yoke, rose to the number of upwards of two hundred thousand men, and threatened to make an irruption into Italy, but they were defeated by Germanicus and Tiberius. It was remarkable, that when Barro, the general of those barbarians, was asked how he presumed to take up arms against the Romans, he boldly answered, "That the Dalmatians were a free people, and that the Romans were murderers and thieves, who came to disturb them in the peaceable possession of their rights and privileges." The arms of Augustus were not so successful in every part of the empire, for Quintilius Varus having penetrated too far into Germany, was defeated, and he with his whole army cut in pieces. This was such a stroke as Augustus had not hitherto met with, and it affected him the more sensibly, as the unfortunate legions were the bravest in the whole army.

IN A SERIES OF LETTERS. 65

The flourishing state of Augustus's affairs at Rome, notwithstanding some losses in the provinces, was interrupted by domestic evils, namely, the vices of his own relations. His wife Livia, whom he had married in a scandalous manner while her husband was alive, was a woman of a haughty disposition, and she did not fail to domineer over him with the most imperious sway.

She had two sons by her former husband, namely, Drusus and Tiberius, but Drusus died of a cold that he contracted in the camp. Tiberius, her other son, was a young man of good abilities, but he was of a cruel, vicious disposition, and obstinately bent on seeking revenge against all those whom he imagined gave him the most trifling affront.

Augustus had a daughter named Julia, by his former wife Scibonia, and her father having married her first to Agrippa, one of his lieutenants, and then to Tiberius, his son-in-law; she not only launched out into all sorts of extravagance, but also plunged herself into the most horrid scenes of debauchery. Augustus beheld with concern, the vicious conduct of his daughter, and as she was become a scandal to the court, he banished her to Pandatria, along with her mother Scribonia, forbidding any person to visit her without an order from himself. Whatever Augustus felt on that occasion, may easily be conceived by an indulgent parent, especially as he was then far advanced in years, and struggling under the decay of nature.

U. C. Under these afflicting circumstances in
766 his family, he appointed Tiberius with
him in the government, and desired
that the senate and the people should pay him the
highest honours. He then made choice of twenty
patricians

patricians as a standing council, who with the senate were to assist him in all public affairs, that he might enjoy the sweets of tranquility without interruption. He ordered the people to be numbered, and found that they amounted to upwards of four millions, from which we may conclude that mankind were in those ages much more numerous than at present.

This was one of the last solemn acts performed by Augustus, for soon after, in his journey along with Tiberius to Illirica, he was taken ill at Beneventum, and died at Nola, in the seventy-sixth year of his age, and forty-second of his reign.

Whatever might be the character of Augustus, either in private or public life, certain it is, that the Romans treated his memory with great respect, and paid him the highest honours. On his death-bed he gave Tiberius and the council, together with the senate, the most wholesome advise, and in particular recommended to them not to desire to enlarge the bounds of the empire, because it was already too large for the head. He recommended unity among the senators, and pointed out the necessity they were under to submit to his successor, Tiberius, whom he had by his will appointed emperor, and left particular directions concerning his funeral.

Thus died Octavius Augustus Cæsar, one of the most celebrated men we find mentioned in history, whether we consider him as a warrior, a sovereign, or a friend to learning and learned men. It is true, some part of his life, especially when joined with the triumvirate, was stained with several acts of cruelty, but possibly these might have happened in consequence of his desire to promote the interest of the republic, and to preserve himself from the power of his enemies.

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Certain it is, that after the battle of Actium, no prince could have done more to promote the interests of his subjects than Augustus. He seemed to make the arts of peace his study, and he took a particular pleasure in conversing with learned men. Many good laws were drawn up under his immediate inspection, and the people who had been long harassed by intestine divisions, made such improvements in useful knowledge as had never been attempted before. At his death, the Roman empire was the most extensive the sun had ever shone upon. It contained great part of Europe, particularly, some parts of Germany, Spain, Gaul, Italy, Greece, Illyricum, Dacia, and Panonia, to which may be added the southern parts of Britain, though not then totally subdued. Medea, Judea, Syria, Mesopotamia, Armenia, and all those provinces called the Lesser Asia, were joined to the empire, together with Egypt, Numidia, Mauritania, Abyssinia, and many other provinces in Africa.

The revenues of the empire were equal to its extent, for as we are able to judge at this distance of time, near forty millions of our money was yearly paid into the treasury. No period ever produced a greater number of learned men, witness the immortal writings of Horace, Virgil, Livy, Ovid, and many others, whose names will be celebrated as long as the latin language is taught.

But the greatest happiness that the people enjoyed was that of being delivered from those intestine divisions by which the republic had for many years been torn in pieces. The Romans were now arrived at a state of maturity, they were united under one head, and instead of nominal liberty, for which they had so long contended, they enjoyed that which was real,

real, even under a prince cloathed with sovereign authority.

In the twenty-fifth year of the reign of Augustus Cæsar, and the seven hundred and fifty-second year of Rome, Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem of Judea, about four thousand and four hundred years after the creation of the world. This was one of the most important events that ever took place ; for that Divine Teacher came to revive the knowledge of real virtue among men, and bring them back to a sense of that original righteousness by which alone they can obtain the divine favour. At that time there was a general expectation in the world that some great person was to appear, and although the birth of our Saviour did not make a very conspicuous appearance, yet that doctrine taught by him spread itself throughout the Roman empire.

LETTER XLI.

A. D. WE have hitherto traced the affairs of Rome through a variety of changes ¹⁵ always rising to grandeur, but now we must gradually follow them to a state of declension, through a series of luxury and crimes unknown to their ancestors. Tiberius ascended the throne when the empire was in a state of tranquility both at home and abroad, and although his manners were rather forbidding than engaging, yet had he attended to the interest of the republic, he might have reigned gloriously and been crowned with immortal honour ; but advantages are often thrown away upon those who are most unworthy of them.

He had been but a short time on the throne when jealousy seemed to get the better of his reason, and

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as Agrippa Posthumus, the son of Julia, by the general of that name, was still alive, he resolved to destroy him. Accordingly, he first ordered him to be banished to the island of Plausium, and then employed a centurion devoted to his interest, to murder him privately. News of his death being brought to Rome, Tiberius dissembled with so much art, that he denied having any hand in, or any knowledge of the murder, and at the same time threatened to punish the centurion in the most exemplary manner, but this understrapper had been taught how to act his part, and as the emperor had promised to indemnify him, so the matter was hushed up, and no further notice taken of it.

The spirit of liberty was now in a manner extinct among the Roman people, they seemed to court slavery, and that they might give the most convincing proof of their sordid disposition, every thing even of a legal nature, that ought to have come under the cognizance of the senate, was referred to the emperor. Indeed, Tiberius was so well acquainted with dissimulation, that he triumphed in the most easy manner over the senate, who were now sunk into all sorts of luxury. He represented to them that he had not abilities sufficient to govern the empire after so great a man as Augustus, and therefore expatiated largely on the obligations he was under to the senators, who assisted him with their council. He even went so far as to tell them that any one province of the empire was sufficient to satisfy his most ambitious views, upon which Asinius Gallus boldly demanded which of the provinces he would make choice of.

Tiberius, who did not expect such a question being proposed to him, was considerably disconcerted, but assuming an air of humility, he told the senate

senate that it was inconsistent with the duty he owed to the public, to make choice of any single province, but to abide by their directions.

Gallus began to look upon the question proposed by him as rather imprudent, and Tiberius being importuned by the adulations of the senate, took upon himself the whole government, and reigned in a far more arbitrary manner than any had ever done before him.

The first years of the reign of Tiberius were distinguished by many acts of clemency, for he often refused to punish those who had publicly libelled him, telling their accusers, that people in a free city ought to deliver their sentiments with freedom. Nay, it often happened, that when the senate offered to ratify whatever he should think proper to dictate, he would tell them that he was not infallible, and therefore they ought not to trust him with too much power. Some persons proposed that he ought to raise the taxes, in order to support his own grandeur; he answered, "that he would act as a faithful shepherd, by shearing his sheep without stripping off their skins."

Nor were his views confined to such things as seemed only to aggrandize himself by a well-timed dissimulation, for he made several laws to punish all abuses of a public nature, such as disorderly houses, and every thing that tended towards corrupting the morals of the people. Before that time, it had been but too common for the people in Rome to assassinate each other as they were walking along the streets, and seditions were very frequent, especially among those who had lived before the government was properly settled; but Tiberius put a stop to these proceedings, and made the people pay a proper regard to the laws. On the other hand,

the

the senate did all they could to flatter his vanity, and whatever he might think of them, he endeavoured to conciliate their affections.

While Tiberius was thus endeavouring to ingratiate himself with the people by all the arts of dissimulation, Germanicus acquired great popularity among the soldiers, who were in a manner devoted to his interest, and they resolved to chuse him emperor. Prudence, however, hindered him from complying with the request of the army, and in order to give the emperor a convincing proof of his attachment to his interest, he at the hazard of his own life, ordered all those to be put to death who sought to force the honour upon him. Tiberius was charmed to hear of the loyalty of Germanicus, but when he was informed that he had carried his conquests beyond the Rhine, and subdued several barbarous nations, his jealousy began to take the alarm, and therefore he resolved, if possible, to get him into his power, where he would not have the legions to assist him, in case any injury was offered to him.

A. D. While he was projecting schemes to bring about the destruction of Germanicus,

17. an impostor started up in Italy, who assumed the name of Agrippa, who had been dead many years, and however idle and insignificant the report might appear, yet such was the popular clamour, that the state seemed to be threatened with intestine convulsions. The real name of this impostor was Clemens, and Tiberius, ever a master of the arts of dissimulation, employed two soldiers to ingratiate themselves into his favour, which they did, and brought him prisoner to the emperor, who ordered that he should be confined in a dungeon, and

and there he was put to death in the most private manner.

While Tiberius was going on in this manner, the Parthians rebelled and murdered two of their kings, for they were of such a restless disposition, that neither threatenings nor promises could bring them into order. Tiberius, who on other occasions of a similar nature would have been ready to take the field embraced this opportunity of recalling Germanicus with the legions under his command, for which purpose he sent notice to him that the senate had decreed him a triumph, and that it would be much more for his interest to return to Italy than to remain in Germany, where he had done every thing in his power to curb the insolence of the barbarians.

In answer to these solicitations, Germanicus desired leave of the emperor to remain one year longer in Germany, in order to finish his conquests, but Tiberius, like a true master of dissimulation, prevailed upon him by a great number of promises to change his resolution. Accordingly, he returned to Rome, where he was treated with the utmost respect, for many thousands of the citizens came out to meet him, and the gracefulness of his person, with the appearance of his five children in his triumphal chariot, made him an object of admiration to all who beheld him. Tiberius endeavoured to dissemble his resentment, and seemed to join with the rest of the citizens in the general applause, but all he wanted was to send the object of his resentment out of Rome, lest he should eclipse himself in glory.

The severity that the proconsuls had shewn towards the inhabitants of the several conquered provinces in Asia, induced them to present remonstrances to the emperor, who in conjunction with the conduct of the Parthians, seemed not unworthy

of his notice. To conceal his real intentions, he proposed in the senate, that Germanicus should have all Asia assigned him, but he took care at the same time that Cneius Piso should be sent thither, in order to be a check upon his conduct, and restrain his ambition within proper bounds.

A. D. Accordingly Germanicus set out for Asia with every thing necessary for carrying

¹⁹ on the war, and although Piso did all he could to frustrate his designs, yet he took Cilicia, and placed the King of Armenia upon the throne, after he had been driven from it by an usurper. The Parthians were obliged to submit at the same time, but nothing could set bounds to the rage of Piso, and the implacable malice of his wife Plancina, who left nothing undone to traduce his character in the most infamous manner. Germanicus, however, was endowed with such an equanimity of temper, that he took no notice of the plots hatching against him, and to convince them that he was under no apprehension from any thing they could do, he undertook a voyage to Egypt, pretending that his sole motive was the visiting the antiquities of that celebrated country, which were then esteemed superior to all others.

Upon his return from Egypt, he fell sick, and not doubting but poison had been administered to him, by some persons employed by Piso, he sent for that general, and told him, that for the future, he would have no farther connections with him. At last, the severity of his distemper mocked the power of medicine, and he died lamented by every worthy person in the whole empire. Every one mourned for him, for all had formed the strongest hopes of him as the next successor to the emperor. Indeed, the affliction of the people was so great, that

they seemed by every part of their conduct to have marked Piso out for destruction. To encrease the general discontent, Agrippa, the wife of Germanicus, arrived in Italy, carrying the dead ashes of her husband, and attended by her children, who had been along with their father throughout every part, both in Germany and the east.

As she approached the city, most of the people came out to meet her, and being attended by the senators in their robes, the whole exhibited one scene of lamentation. For some time they endeavoured to conceal their sorrow, but no sooner were the ashes of the deceased deposited in the Mausoleum that had been erected for Augustus, than they tore their hair, and testified their grief by every action that could be expressed. From this, we may learn that the only way to procure solid peace, and the real love of our fellow-citizens, is by doing every thing in our power to promote the interests of our country, without an attachment to any party whatever.

The emperor, consistent with his common dissimulation, pretended to be as much affected with the death of Germanicus as any person in Rome, and although he knew that Piso had acted as the instrument of his cruelty and insatiable revenge, yet he permitted an accusation to be preferred against him, at the instance of Agrippa, the wife of the deceased.

Whether Germanicus was taken off by poison, or by any other of Piso's machinations, does not certainly appear, especially at this distance of time, when it is so difficult to enquire into things of that nature. All we know, is, that the trial was protracted several weeks, and before the judges could come to a final resolution, Piso made an end of himself,

self, consistent with the depraved notions of his countrymen. The judges tried his wife Plautina, whose guilt cried aloud for condign punishment; but by the interest of some of those in power, she was acquitted, and restored to all that her husband enjoyed as a free citizen.

Tranquillity being in some measure restored, and Tiberius looking upon government as a thing too difficult for him to manage, associated himself with Drusius, his own son, and retired to the country, under pretence of taking the benefit of the air, in order to re-establish his health. But the emperor was not suffered to enjoy that peace which he seemed so eager to covet. He had been extremely cruel in granting an unlimited power to the quæstors in Gaul, and they had oppressed the people in the most unjust manner.

At last they took up arms, and were seconded by Sacrovir and Florus, two very experienced generals, and at that time formidable enemies to the Roman power, but they were defeated with great slaughter by the legions under the command of Caius Sibius, who had been ordered to march against them. Some other disturbances happened at the same time, but the Roman discipline prevailed over every opposition, and peace was again restored to the empire.

From this period we must begin to consider the emperor Tiberius in a new light, or rather in those natural colours that marked out the most distinguished parts of his character, namely, a pleasure in making his subjects unhappy, an unsatiable revenge against all those whom he supposed his enemies, and a determined resolution to wreck his vengeance upon them. Mean, selfish, and suspicious, he employed none but such as were of the same disposition with himself; and the corruptions of morals

in the court, or at the fountain head, diffused itself among all ranks of people in the empire. Virtue was reduced to an empty name, and vice was cultivated under its sacred character. Every obligation to the performance of moral actions, was neglected, or rather despised, and the people in general seemed to be hastening towards their destruction. No regard was paid either to promises or covenants, and such a general insincerity took place, that one is ready to imagine that both private and public virtue forsook the Romans at once.

Sejanus, the favourite of the emperor, and one of the vilest wretches that ever existed, insinuated to Tiberius that Cremutius Cordus, who had written the annals of Rome, was an enemy to monarchial government, and therefore it was resolved upon that he should loose his life, but the intrepid patriot finding himself devoted to destruction, laid violent hands upon himself before his enemies could wreck their vengeance upon him. This Sejanus was by birth a Volscian, and with respect to his natural qualities, one of those wretches who insinuate themselves into the favour of their sovereigns, in order to domineer over the people, while the sacred sanction of the throne screens them from public justice. Cunning, sly, artful, and deceitful, he pretended to be the friend of the people, while he was no more than the servile minion of his master. By his obsequiousness, he had risen to the highest degree of power, and although his extraction was mean, yet he had so far ingratiated himself with the emperor, that nothing was done without his concurrence. In a word, he was one of those monsters that are at all times a ruin to the commonality, where they are encouraged either by weak or wicked princes. Moral obligation was not considered

sidered by him as any way important, and every thing of a political nature that seemed most likely to aggrandize the power of the prince and enslave the people, was looked upon as the most valuable qualification of a minister, whose design was to trample upon the rights of the people, and make them abject slaves.

This wretch, notwithstanding his mean original, yet had the most ambitious views, and from a variety of circumstances, it appears that he even aimed to make himself emperor of Rome. He bribed one of his creatures to murder Drusius, the son of Tiberius, who never called him to an account for such a flagrant act of cruelty. Tiberius, though in many respects a man not destitute of natural abilities, yet became a dupe to the abilities of his minister, who finding that he could not establish his power while the children of Germanicus were alive, persuaded his master to retire to a private seat in the country, not doubting but that in his absence, he would have an opportunity of governing the empire alone.

The emperor complied with his request, but as his place of retirement was in the Campania near Rome, he found that so many people came daily to him with petitions, that he resolved to look out for a place more retired from the world, for it appears that he was now tired with the affairs of government, and wanted to enjoy that tranquility which cannot be had on a throne. Accordingly, he retired to the island of Capua near Naples, where he gave himself up to such debaucheries as are not proper to be mentioned. Unnatural crimes were transacted daily in his presence, and he seemed to take a pleasure in such things as are shocking to human nature. Women, of the highest rank were debauched by a

lawless tyrant, and all the sober people in the empire looked upon him as a monster not worthy of a place in human society.

While he was thus indulging himself in such crimes as are a disgrace to human nature, his favourite Sejanus was endeavouring to establish his power in the city, by means that will at all times make a man odious to his fellow subjects. Informers of the basest sort were employed to give notice of what passed in every private company, and words spoken in the most innocent manner were often construed into crimes. The most sacred character was not free from blame, nor could virtue itself protect the most dignified.

Accounts of his proceedings were regularly sent to the emperor, who did not so much as call in question the conduct of his minister, whose sole intention seems to have been to make himself great on the ruins of the republic. The children of Germanicus were looked upon by the people as the undoubted heirs to the imperial crown, and therefore Sejanus procured a vile person, one of his own creatures, to arrest the two oldest, namely, Nero and Drusius, and they were put to death privately in a dungeon. In a word, this vile monster Sejanus went on in such a manner, that all ranks of people looked upon him as an object of detestation. He set at defiance the most sacred obligations, and seemed desirous of power for no other purpose but that of trampling upon the rights of a brave and free people, who had arrived at a state of grandeur unknown to all the nations around them.

The aspiring views of Sejanus, which seemed to flow from a mind solely actuated by ambition, alarmed the fears of the emperor, and he began to look upon himself as under an absolute necessity of taking

taking care to preserve himself. Accordingly, he caused his favourite minister to be apprehended, but consistent with every part of his character, dissembled so much, that he sent a rescript to the senate, desiring them to shew him all the favour they could consistent with the laws, and at the same time told Sejanus that he would have ships ready to convey him out of Italy, if any thing of a rigorous nature should happen. The senate, however, were not in the least unacquainted with the natural disposition of the emperor, and therefore as soon as Sejanus was brought before them, they ordered him for immediate execution.

This was a reverse of fortune that he little expected, and to his great mortification, all those who pretended to be his friends, forsook him as a person with whom it was not safe to have any connection. Nay, they even loaded him with curses and execrations while he was leading to the place of execution. When the executioner had strangled him, the people dragged his dead body through the streets, and not satisfied with that, they wrecked their vengeance upon all his children and dependants. Such in general, is the fate of favourites, and it ought to be a lesson to statesmen never to forget the interests of the people, and never to put any confidence in the promises that an arbitrary tyrant may happen to make to them.

One would have imagined that the death of the favourite would have induced the emperor to relax his severity, and cultivate the affections of his people; but quite the reverse took place.

Caligula, the son of Germanicus was still alive, and as he was vicious in the whole of his manners, Sextus Vertilius wrote a satire against him, for which he was put to death, and soon after Plautina,

the wife of Piso, shared the same fate, unpitied by every one who wished well to their country. All those who had been the partizans of Sejanus, either suffered death by the hands of the common executioner, or made away with themselves, consistent with the depraved notions they had imbibed.

Indeed, so many executions daily happened, that the city of Rome resembled a slaughter-house rather than a place set apart for the reception of civil society. The streets were deluged with blood, and in every corner was to be seen the mangled bodies of the unhappy sufferers. This most inhuman of all tyrants, who seemed utterly destitute of natural affection, and of even more than a brutal disposition, was so lost to all sentiments of humanity, that he even ordered many of the poor wretches who had incurred his displeasure, to be tortured in his presence. He took pleasure in beholding their sufferings, for his mind was so filled with suspicion, that he looked upon every one who approached him as his enemy. The city of Rome was filled with mourning from one end to the other, and no one looked upon himself as in a state of safety, for informers were employed to accuse the innocent, who generally fell a victim to the cruelty of the tyrant.

In the mean time, many of the inhabitants of the provinces revolted, and made many depredations upon those who would not join with them in the general insurrection, and so lost was the emperor to every sense of obligation owing by him to the public, that he paid no regard to them, and even wished that Rome itself should die with him. In such a detested manner this tyrant lived some years in his place of retirement, and that he should have lived so long must remain a convincing proof that that both private and public virtue were extinguished among

among the Roman people. A variety of diseases, the consequences of his debaucheries, now seemed to threaten his dissolution, and then he began to think of some person proper to be appointed his successor in the empire.

He was strongly prejudiced against Caligula, the son of Germanicus, but for all that he resolved at last to fix upon him as his successor. His design in so doing, shews that he was a profound politician, for as he was convinced that his own vices were of a most glaring nature, so he thought that Caligula would carry things to such an extremity, that the latter would observe the former, and the people would even wish for another Tiberius. News of this resolution having been transmitted to Caligula, he was so earnest to obtain the imperial crown, that he gave orders to have the emperor smothered, by putting upon him a great number of pillows, and after a reign of twenty-two years, he died at the advanced age of seventy-eight.

Upon a careful perusal of the Roman History, we find none of the emperors who reigned so long, and at the same time was such an object of detestation as Tiberius. Whatever he was in his youth, certain it is that after the death of Augustus, he assumed a character that surprised all the people. He had no ambition to acquire what is properly called real greatness, or solid glory; but his mind was fixed on cruelty, and his time spent in debauchery. In a word, he was a monster in human shape; he was nominal governor of a great republic, but at the same time he domineered over the people in so crock a manner, that they considered him as an infernal devil sent from hell to torment them.

The most remarkable event that happened in the reign of this emperor, was the crucifixion of our

Saviour, Jesus Christ, at Jerusalem, who suffered by order of the governor, Pontius Pilate. This happened about four years before the death of Tiberius, and as soon as the event took place, we are told that Pilate sent an account of his miracles to Rome, declaring that he believed him to be a God; but the senate refused to admit him to that honour on account of the enmity they had to the Jews. The consequence, however, was, that the gospel was preached to the world, and life and immortality brought to light.

LETTER XLII.

CALIGULA, the successor of Tiberius, was so named on account of the little buskins he wore, for he seldom put on any other dress besides that of the common soldiers, whose favourite he was, and among whom he had been brought up from his infancy.

Few princes ever ascended the throne with so many appearances of reigning in the hearts of the people, for he was the son of Germanicus, whom the army adored as a father rather than a general, and as his predecessor had been a most merciless tyrant, the citizens as well as the senators, did not imagine that human nature could produce such another monster of iniquity. Crowds of people went out to meet him as he approached the gates, and their acclamations were such as seemed even to border on madness, for no titles, however flattering, were thought too great to be bestowed upon him. Statues of him were set up in every part of the empire, and Artabanus, king of Parthia, voluntarily did homage to the Roman eagles. The funeral rites of the late emperor were solemnized

solemnized in the most splendid manner, and that he might give his subjects a proof of his filial piety, he ordered games to be celebrated in memory of his father Germanicus, and brought the ashes of his mother and brother from the island of Portia and Pandataria, to be deposited in Rome. All the laws that had been disused in the reign of Tiberius, he caused to be revived and enforced, and made many new regulations for the good of the people. He seemed to be destitute of suspicion, the vice of his predecessor, and when any one told him of a conspiracy, he paid no regard to it, telling them he had done nothing to incur the displeasure of any honest man.

Such of the magistrates as had incurred the displeasure of the people, he caused to be banished, among whom was Pontius Pilate, who crucified our Saviour, sent to Transalpine Gaul, where he died by his own hands. When any of the knights were convicted of crimes, he caused them to be punished in the most exemplary manner. Such tributary kings as had been illegally driven from their thrones by Tiberius, he caused to be restored, and bestowed upon them several privileges.

Such was the beginning of the reign of Caligula, and it must be acknowledged that nothing could seem better calculated to insure popular applause; but unfortunately for Rome, it was but of short continuance, for he had not been above a year on the throne, when he gave such instances of his cruelty, as even indicated that he would be more odious to the Romans than Tiberius.

He had been taken ill some time after he had ascended the throne, and in order to enjoy the benefit of fresh air, he retired to the Campania. The people were so much concerned lest he should be taken

taken off by death, that some of them made vows to devote themselves in sacrifice to the gods upon condition that he should recover. Among those who were most forward to dedicate themselves to sacrifice for his memory, was one Politus; and although in the madness of his enthusiasm he never imagined that he would be obliged to fulfill his vow, yet no sooner had the emperor recovered than he insisted that he should make good what he had sworn in so solemn a manner. Accordingly he was led round the walls by boys crowned with flowers, and then as a just reward for a rash promise, he was thrown headlong from the walls and dashed in pieces.

Some others suffered the same fate, and he even caused his father-in-law to be put to death in the most illegal manner upon the evidence of false witnesses, who had been suborned for that purpose. Some have thought that Caligula would never have acted in such a manner, had he not been disordered in his intellects, which was ascribed to the effects of a severe fever; but whatever truth may be in these suppositions, certain it is, that his whole conduct made him resemble a madman rather than a rational creature.

Neither the flattery of the courtiers, nor the fulsome praises of the people, were sufficient to satisfy his ambition, for he even insisted that he should be worshipped as a god throughout the whole Roman empire. The statues of the gods were by his order broken down, and his own erected in their stead, and every one was commanded to pay him the same divine honours as if he had been an immortal being. That every part of his conduct should be of a piece, he assumed the names of the different gods and goddesses in their turn, and one day

day he was a male deity while the next presented him as a female. He caused a splendid temple to be erected to himself, and he had many priests to offer up sacrifices to him ; nay, he even went so far into the most ridiculous extravagancies as to offer up sacrifice to himself : he was both god and priest. He frequently invited the moon to his bed, and when he heard thunder, he would defy Jupiter to come and engage with him in single combat. One would have thought that there had not been such a monster in the universe, and yet nothing is here asserted but what is corroborated by the testimony of the most respectable historians who lived in that age among the Romans.

The manners, or rather the crimes of the emperor, seemed to have dispersed themselves among all ranks of the citizens, for the most illustrious Roman ladies prostituted their persons to him, gloating in that which they ought to have considered as their shame. Nor was he less infamous for his crimes with his own sex, that are of such a nature as ought not to be mentioned, and he even seduced three of his own sisters, and lay with them in public. He took Drusilla, the wife of Longinus, from her husband, and when she died, he declared her a goddess, ordering that divine honours should be paid her, and that she should be invoked in common with himself. He would often be present at the marriages of the nobility, and as soon as the ceremony was over, he would take the bride home to his bed without any regard to the laws of society. Milonia Cæsonia, one of his wives, had such an ascendancy over him, that notwithstanding all his unlawful crimes, she remained with him to the last. This can only be ascribed to her natural love of debauchery ; for although he would strip her naked, and

and shew her to his favourites, yet she never seemed to blush.

Cruelty was another of his most odious vices, for no sooner did he see any of the nobility acquire the notice of the public on account of some meritorious action, than he caused them to be put to death. When he saw any one with beautiful hair, he caused their heads to be shaved, and at other times obliged the most handsome among the young nobility to descend into the theatre, and fight with the gladiators, where if they escaped with their lives, they were sure to have their bodies mangled in the most shocking manner. When any of the gladiators came off victorious, and obtained the public applause, he was instantly put to death, lest his fame should eclipse that of the emperor.

Nor was he less remarkable for his prodigality than his other vices, for he was daily inventing new luxuries ; the whole empire was ransacked to find fresh delicacies for his table, and such sauces were served up as had never been seen in Rome before that period. He had a favourite horse named Incitatus, for whom he built a stable of the finest marble, and a manger of ivory, and ordered that centinels should be placed at the door in the night, lest he should be disturbed in his slumbers. Nay, he even went to such a degree of brutal madness as to cause the horse to dine with him in public, at which time he was served out of a golden cup. He told the Romans he would make his horse consul, and it is probable he would have proceeded to that act of extravagance, had not the animal died, before he had time to put his resolution in practice. He ordered a great navy to be fitted out, and when he had sailed with them along the shore of the Campania, he caused them to be drawn up in the form of a crescent,

crescent, and then chained together in such a manner that the whole resembled one continued street. Houses were built upon them, and thither his whole court were ordered to come, that the splendor of the emperor thrown away in such a profuse manner should make the most dazzling appearance. The sumptuous entertainment that he gave to the people was consistent with the rest of his conduct, and because the weather remained calm several days, he boasted that Neptune was afraid to give him any offence, he being his superior as a god. During the night, the whole fleet was illuminated in the most splendid manner, and in the morning the emperor harangued on his own fancied greatness.

Such prodigality soon exhausted all those vast treasures that had been hoarded up by Tiberius, but Caligula, instead of retrenching his expences, invented new methods of rapine to support himself in unnecessary luxury. Taxes were imposed on the most necessary articles of life, and even the meanest labourer was obliged to contribute towards supporting his extravagance. Gaming houses were licenced in every part of the city, and brothels set up, where the most unnatural crimes were committed. When the emperor had an ill run at play, he was sure to confiscate the goods, and even the estates of those who happened to win from him, and if they complained, they were instantly put to death. Indeed, to enumerate all the crimes committed by him in Rome, is utterly unnecessary in this work, for those already mentioned may serve as a specimen, and the bare recital of them is shocking to human nature.

A. D. While he was going on in this manner, some of the Romans, who looked upon him as a monster of iniquity, began to form

form parties for their own deliverance, or rather conspiracies, by which they might rid themselves of one who seemed a monster of every sort of iniquity. In order, therefore, to regain some part of his popularity, he amused the senate with an account of his intended expedition to Britain, and for that purpose ordered new forces to be raised, so that the people began to imagine that he was at last roused from a state of sensuality. But notwithstanding the number of his forces, and all the other necessaries for carrying on the war, yet such was his madness, that when he came to the coast of Belgia, opposite Britain, he summoned, by blowing a trumpet, the people to surrender, and then causing each of the soldiers to take a shell in his hat as a trophy of victory, sent a pompous account of his expedition to the senate. He even caused a tower to be erected in memory of his boasted victory, and harangued the soldiers on their warlike courage, although not one of them had struck a single blow.

The senate, however, obsequious to him in all his extravagant actions, yet reflected, that if they ordered him a triumph, it would be considered as an insult, for his cowardice was now become as conspicuous as his other crimes. The resolution of the senate was conveyed to the emperor, which enraged him so much, that when the deputies came out to meet him, he drew his sword, and told them that he would convince them of his power when he came into the city. Whether there was one spark of prudence remaining in his breast to deter him from wrecking his vengeance on the senate, or whether he waited for a more favourable opportunity to gratify his revenge, certain it is, he did not at that time make any further demands of those honours he had been so earnest to acquire before.

However,

However, the senate gave him one proof of their attachment, by tearing in pieces Proculus, one of their own members, who had exerted himself in haranguing against the emperor. Soon after his return from his mock expedition against the Britons, he was waited on by Philo, the Jew, attended by some others of his countrymen, who had come from Alexandria to convince him, that they could not, consistent with their law, offer sacrifices to his image. The emperor received them in the most haughty and imperious manner, asking them what reason they could assign why they would not worship him, in the same manner as was done by his other subjects.

Philo, the Jew, was one of the most learned men of the age in which he lived, and as appears from the whole of his conduct an ornament to Jewish commonwealth. Besides, such knowledge as he had acquired among his own countrymen, he had made himself acquainted with the laws of the Roman empire, and wherever he happened to settle, he enforced obedience to the decrees of the emperor, so far as religion was not concerned. He addressed himself to Caligula in the most humble and respectable manner, and told him that different nations had different customs, to which they looked upon themselves as under the strictest obligations to adhere, that notwithstanding those different customs, yet they were faithful subjects of Rome, and had done every thing in their power to support the dignity of the government.

Caligula asked him in an insulting manner; "Why the jews would not eat pork?" To which, Philo replied, "That some nations would not eat Lamb, and yet both were loyal subjects" Upon that, the brutal tyrant threatened the deputies in the most

most insulting manner, upon which Philo, in the most pious and heroic attitude, turned to his companions, and repeated aloud, “ that God would grant them that request which the emperor had denied.” The jews returned to inform their brethren in Alexandria of the little reason they had to expect any favour from the tyrant, and to their honour let it be mentioned that these people refused to worship the image of the emperor, although many of them were punished for it by the governors of the provinces in the most cruel manner, as well as some Christians, whom the Romans considered in the same light as Jews.

While the tyrant was going on in such a manner as threatened universal ruin to the empire, Cassius Cherea, a tribune of the Praetorian bands, resolved to deliver mankind from such a monster. The spirit of the antient Romans seemed revived in this man, who had on many occasions given the most signal proofs of his courage, but Caligula took every method to treat him with the utmost contempt, because of his superior merit. It was no difficult matter to persuade many respectable persons to join in the conspiracy, since the emperor was become an object of detestation to all those who wished well to the interests of government, and the rights of the subjects. Some of the principal senators and knights had received injuries from the emperor of a very striking nature, and others were marked out for destruction because of their riches, which he longed to enjoy, in order to support his unbounded extravagance.

Among these, the most active were Valerius Asiaticus, whose wife Caligula had seduced and debauched; Annius Vincianus, who had been treated with great cruelty, and Calistus Cassius, a man of

very

very extensive property. At the same time many others joined in the conspiracy, all from motives of a similar nature, and several incidents seemed to hasten the destruction of the tyrant. As Caligula was conscious of his guilt, so he lived in continual fear, and employed the basest wretches to give information against all those whom he suspected. Among others was Pompeius, a senator, and as it was suspected that he was connected with one Quæsilia, an actress, she was ordered to give evidence against him, but refused to accuse him, although she was tortured till all her limbs were dislocated: a degree of fortitude seldom found in the female sex.

This horrid act of cruelty alarmed the rest of the conspirators, who began to consider that with respect to their own safety no time was to be lost, and therefore, after several consultations, it was resolved that the most proper time to make away with the tyrant, would be during the Cirencian games, which lasted four days, when the guards would have no suspicion of their intentions.

Three of these days having elapsed without any thing being done by the conspirators, Cherea began to look upon the whole of their measures as disconcerted, and therefore determined that the next day as the emperor passed through a private gallery to the baths, he should be dispatched, because he would be then unattended, unless it was by a few of his domestics. The conspiracy, however, was not so secretly carried on, as to be totally hid from the emperor, who got notice of it from several of his servants; but his time was come, and his mind was infatuated. He remained all day at the games, and seemed extremely cheerful; for it is probable he did not believe the reports he had heard; but towards

the

the evening, he went to the baths, where he was met by some young shepherdesses, who sung hymns to his praise.

When he had been there some time, he resolved to return to the theatre, but just as he was passing through a narrow gallery, Cherea stabbed him, and the rest of the conspirators being ready at the door, rushed in, and dispatched him, after having given him thirty wounds. His wife and child were put to death at the same time, and his treasures ordered to be applied to public use, and care was taken that his memory should be transmitted with infamy to all succeeding ages.

Such was the end of Caligula, the fourth emperor of Rome, one of the most abandoned monsters that ever sat upon the throne of sovereign authority. His taste for literature seems to have been as vicious as the other parts of his life; for it is said of him that he considered Livy as an ignorant historian, and Virgil as a poet destitute of genius. In a word, the character given of him by Seneca, seems to be true, namely, "That he was sent into the world to shew how far corrupt nature could exert itself in vicious actions."

A. D. Caligula being thus dispatched, the conspirators resolved to provide for their own safety, and therefore took care to conceal themselves in the most private places. The whole city was in an uproar, but some imagined it was only a false rumour spread by the emperor himself, in order to discover the sentiments of the people, who were his friends, or who were his enemies. The auxiliary soldiers, particularly the Germans, plundered the citizens of their most valuable effects, under pretence that they did it to revenge

the death of the emperor, and every senator whom they met was murdered in cool blood.

Such barbarities, however, were too severe to be of long duration, and therefore, when the troubles began to subside, the senate assembled in order to deliberate on the most proper methods to be used in preserving the peace of the city. Some of them harangued on the necessity of abolishing monarchial government, and even went so far as to propose that the name of Cæsar should be for ever extinguished, but this was too late, for the soldiers overpowered the senate, and the people thought no freedom equal to that of the government's being lodged in a single person.

During the deliberations of the senate, the soldiers, in ransacking the palace, happened to discover Claudius, the uncle of Caligula, who had endeavoured to conceal himself, lest he should have shared the same fate as his nephew. Claudius had been looked upon hitherto as a person too weak to govern the empire, but the soldiers, who were in a state of distraction, and scarce knew what they did, took him upon their shoulders, and conducted him in triumph to the camp.

In vain did the senate remonstrate against the conduct of the soldiers, for their power was only nominal, and therefore they confirmed him in his titles, and went out in a body to congratulate him.

Claudius, who was now fifty years of age, finding himself in possession of the empire, ordered all those who had conspired against Caligula, to be put to death, and those who escaped the hand of the executioner, put an end to their own lives. Cherea behaved with all the fortitude of an antient Roman, and

and met death with a resolution that seemed consistent with the whole of his conduct in life.

Whatever may be the subsequent conduct of princes, they generally ascend the throne amidst the acclamations of the people, who are apt to promise themselves great things, without considering the depravity of human nature, or the many temptations that usually surround a throne. It was so with Claudius, who began his reign by abolishing all the illegal institutions of Caligula, and after staining the scaffold with some public executions, he published an act of oblivion, by which all former conspiracies were to be cancelled for ever, nor was any person to be punished on account of them.

That he might not incur any suspicion of that impiety for which his predecessor had been so justly condemned, he ordered that no person whatever should pay him divine honours, and he daily sat in public to hear and decide in all disputed causes. He took care that the people should be properly supplied with corn, and the severest punishments were inflicted on those who kept back provisions from the public markets. Pirates, who robbed ships, were punished in the most exemplary manner, and that water should be brought to the city, he ordered an aqueduct to be built, by which that useful and necessary article was conveyed to the most eminent parts of Rome. The lake of Fucinus was drained at a vast expence, and the waters thereof were conveyed to the Tiber, by which the strength of the current was considerably enlarged. A mountain of three miles in circumference was levelled to the ground, and many stately buildings were erected by him.

Nor was his care confined to the city alone: it likewise extended to the provinces; for he banished

Herod,

Herod, king of Judea, who had put John the Baptist to death, and in his room established Herod Agrippa. Justice was executed with great severity on such as had revolted, particularly the Rhodians, who had murdered some of the Roman citizens, and the Lycians, who had caused several of them to be crucified.

We have already seen in what manner Julius Cæsar made two attempts to conquer the island of Britain, and although he imposed a tax upon the inhabitants, yet during the space of an hundred years, it had never been regularly paid. The emperor, therefore, in order to ingratiate himself the more with the people, proposed that Britain should be added to the Roman empire, nor was it long before a pretext was found out.

Berius, a British prince, having given some offence to his countrymen, went to Rome, and told the emperor that nothing was more easy than to conquer the island of Britain, because of the intestine divisions that then reigned among the different states.

Accordingly, Plautinus, the prætor, was sent to command the army, and after a variety of engagements, in which the Britons and their king Cymbeline, were almost reduced to sue for terms of peace. Plautinus, when he found that he was in a

A. D. manner sure of success, sent for the emperor

46 Claudio*s*, who came over to Britain in per-

son, and received the homage of the people. When he had been in Britain about sixteen days, and received the homage of such of the princes as chose to submit, he returned to Rome, where he was received with every demonstration of joy, and the senate decreed him a triumph. Plautinus and Vespasian were left to carry on the war against such as still held

held out against the Roman legions, and part of the island was reduced to a Roman province.

A. D. 51 Ostorius having been sent to command in the room of Plautinus, the Britons conceived the most mean notions of his military skill, and therefore the Brigantes, who inhabited that part of the island between the Tyne and the Humber, then called Brigantes, with the Silures who inhabited South Wales, took up arms under the famous Caractacus, a man of great valour, who successively defeated the Romans; and although they were more often defeated themselves, yet the Britons made good retreats, and secured themselves behind their inaccessible mountains. From these places they made sallies upon the Romans, and often cut off great numbers of their soldiers.

At last, the Britons under the command of Caractacus, finding themselves under an absolute necessity of coming to a general engagement, the British general made a most excellent speech, in order to encourage them to exert themselves against the Romans. He represented to them that the Romans were a body of lawless robbers, who by force and fraud had extended their conquests over many nations, who by nature were free, and now they were come to dispossess the inhabitants of Britain of their antient territories. The Britons were now determined to conquer or die, and therefore a most bloody battle ensued, but the discipline of the Romans overcame the valour of the Britons, and the wife and daughter of Caractacus being taken prisoners, the brave hero himself fled for refuge to Carisman-dua, queen of the Brigantes, who delivered him up to the conquerors, and he was sent prisoner to Rome. When he was brought there, vast crouds of people came together to see a man who had, by the

the greatest conduct and the most invincible courage, opposed the whole of their power, and as he expected, that consistent with the notions of these times, he would be put to death, he addressed himself to the emperor, in one of the finest speeches that ever came from the mouth of one whom the Romans called a barbarian. He said, that had his moderation been like that of some other persons, he would never have graced the triumphs of the emperor, but none could account for the events of war. He professed his love to his country, but at the same time he was now defeated, and even a prisoner, if his life was granted him, consistent with the generosity of the Romans, he would for ever acknowledge it with gratitude.

The emperor suffered his resentment to give place to his generosity, and in consequence thereof pardoned the courageous British chief, but what became of him afterwards, is not certainly known; probably, he was sent to some of the eastern provinces, where he would not have an opportunity of giving Claudius any future disturbance.

The popular manner in which Claudius began his reign, was soon obscured by acts of a very cruel nature, that seemed to arise from his weakness, and the power that favourites had over him. Among these the most chief was his wife Messalina, a woman, whose cruelty was equal to her lust, and who by her debaucheries has left an indelible stain upon her memory. By her jealousy and intrigues she caused several of the Roman senators to be put to death, and in those iniquitous practices she was assisted by Callistus, the master of the requests, Pallus, the treasurer, and Narcissus, the secretary of state.

These minions of court-favour exercised the greatest rigour over the Roman people, and the emperor, after having murdered Appius Silanus, who had married his mother, he caused his two sons-in-law, with their two sisters, to be put to death without suffering them to speak one word in their own defence.

These cruelties occasioned several combinations among the people; and the most formidable was by Camillus, whom he had appointed to the government of Dalmatia. When that general had declared himself emperor at the head of the army, he sent threatening letters to the emperor, commanding him to resign the imperial crown; but the soldiers, whose notions of superstition operated upon their minds, refused to obey him, and therefore put him to death, while many of those who were suspected of adhering to him in Rome, were executed in the most public manner, by order of the empress and her favourites.

LETTER XLIII.

WHEN weak princes once give themselves up to the directions of favourites, the most dignified respectable, and virtuous of their subjects, are not sure that they are in a state of safety. Indeed, there is then such an antipathy in court minions against those who oppose corruption, that they never think their power fully established, till they have put them out of the way, and it frequently happens that means are seldom wanting.

The conspiracy of Camillus having proved abortive, Cecina Petus, a celebrated Roman, was accused of being concerned in it, and witnesses were suborned

suborned, to swear that he had attempted to escape to Dalmatia. Such accusations, which when preferred against him, were utterly false, induced him to take that fatal step, in order to save his life; but he had not been long there when he was apprehended by some men sent after him for that purpose. Every indignity that cruelty could inflict, was shewn to this brave man, and when he was put on board a vessel to be taken to Italy, his wife Arrius desired leave to accompany him, but that small favour was denied her. Not in the least intimidated with the threatenings of his keepers, she hired a fisherman's boat, and embarking in it, kept up with the vessel till they arrived in Italy. Their only son died about the same time, but such was the courage of this Roman lady, that she never shewed the least signs of fear, for when her husband seemed to be intimidated at the thoughts of his approaching fate, she endeavoured to inspire him with fortitude, lest he should bring dishonour upon his family. Nay, when she went to visit him in prison, after he was condemned, and saw him wavering in his mind, she took a poniard and stabbed herself, telling him that she did not feel any pain. While the favourites of the emperor were going on in this manner, Claudio became a slave to suspicion, nor would he suffer any person to approach his presence till the guards had previously searched him. Such in general is the fate of weak princes, for the sovereign who acts equitably in the administration of government, need not desire a stronger security than the affections of his people.

As Claudio gave himself up wholly to indolence, so he became more and more cruel, and nothing seemed to give him so much pleasure as the sight of a public execution. The more elevated the rank of

the person who was the object of his resentment, the more fertile was his genius in finding out new tortures to inflict upon him, and besides three hundred knights, we are told that above thirty senators were executed by his order. Messalina, his wife, was such a monster of lasciviousness, that when she sent for any of the senators with their wives, she would order them to have carnal knowledge of each other while they were in her presence, and if any of them refused, they were sure to be immediately given up to the lictors, and executed publicly.

Nothing could set bounds to the lasciviousness and cruelty of this abandoned woman, for having heard much in praise of Caius Silenus, a young Roman nobleman, she sent for him, and after loading him with the most valuable part of her treasures, she obliged him to divorce his wife Junia Silius, and cohabited with him in the most open and scandalous manner.

In the mean time, the poor weak mean-spirited emperor never complained, but that only served to make them more public in their lewdness, for as Messalina was extreme in all her resolutions, so when Claudius went to reside some time at Ostia, she caused her nuptials with this young Roman, to be publicly solemnized. Public games were exhibited on the occasion, and in the midst of the entertainments, one Valus, a buffoon, climed up a tree, and called out that he saw a dreadful storm rising at Ostia. But although this fellow passed for a buffoon, yet it is evident he was a quite different sort of a person, and not unacquainted with the affairs of state. Messalina, by her over-bearing temper and haughty conduct, had incurred the hatred of Narcissus, one of the emperor's favourites, and therefore

fore he resolved to embrace the present opportunity of bringing her into disgrace, of which her scandalous conduct made her a proper object. He got two of the emperor's concubines to make known to him the whole affair, and as Claudius was a poor wretch, so he began to be afraid for his own safety.

Narcissus left nothing undone to persuade the emperor that his life was in danger; and that a conspiracy had been long forming against him. He told him that no time was to be lost, and that the only way to provide for his own safety, was to punish the conspirators before they had time to put their designs in practice. The emperor followed the advice of his favourite Narcissus, and came with his guards upon Messalina and her paramour, before they had the least knowledge of his approach. Messalina took shelter in a garden which she had unjustly deprived the real owner of, and from thence sent her daughter Octava and her son Brittannicus, to intercede for her with the emperor, but Narcissus took care to represent her crimes in such a manner, that no regard was paid to her petition. Silius was put to death in the emperor's presence, and as soon as the execution was performed, notice was sent to Messalina that her defence should be heard if she made it herself; but Narcissus, who knew that he would be made the first object of her revenge, rushed out, accompanied by the soldiers and lictors, and found her in the garden, attended by her mother Lepida, who advised her to put an end to her wretched life. This she attempted to do, but effeminacy overcame her fortitude, upon which one of the military tribunes stabbed her dead. News of her death was brought to the emperor while he was at supper, but so insensible was he, and so lost to human feelings,

that neither the woman's fate, who had long been the object of his love, the children who were the pledges of their mutual affection, nor the sneers and brutal joy of her enemies, could alter one feature in his countenance. But herein nothing seems to have been affected, for he was really stupid, as appears from his sending for her next day to a banquet, as if he had been ignorant of what had happened.

Claudius had been so long under the government and direction of women, that he could neither taste nor enjoy the pleasures of a single life. This was an alarming circumstance to his favourites, who had entertained hopes that he would never again enter into the marriage state, but necessity obliged them to look out for a wife for him suitable to their own inclination.

Accordingly, they made choice of Agrippina, daughter of the mother of Germanicus, a woman abandoned to every vice, and cruel even to a proverb; for she had caused her own husband to be poisoned. Some of the senators were of so complying a temper with every thing that pleased the favourites, that they even undertook to threaten the emperor to marry her, if she should make any objection to the proposal. The timid emperor was too much a slave to his fears on the one hand, and his lust on the other, to make any objections, and therefore as soon as the affair was mentioned to him, than he ordered the nuptials to be solemnized in the most public manner.

This ambitious woman was no sooner advanced to her new dignity, of which she was altogether unworthy, than she ruled the weak emperor in a more imperious manner than ever he had been by Messalina. Her design was to place her son Nero

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on the throne instead of Britannicus, the son of Claudius, and she doubted not of being able to effect her purpose.

Artful and designing, she caused Octavia, the daughter of the emperor, to accept of Nero as a husband, and then told Claudius that he ought, in conformity with the conduct of the Romans in former times, to adopt him as his own son. This he complied with, for she had such an absolute ascendancy over him, that he could not refuse to comply with any thing she desired.

That nothing might be wanting to qualify her son for the government of the empire, she ordered the great philosopher Seneca to be re-called from banishment, and appointed his tutor, and certainly he was well qualified for such an employment, as appears from his most excellent writings. Seneca had been born in Spain, but in his youth came to Rome to improve himself in his studies, and he adhered to the sect of the Stoics, at that time the most rigid among all the heathen philosophers. Messalina had accused him of adultery with Julia, niece of the emperor, and although the people loved him for his superior merit, yet she procured an order from Claudius for his banishment.

Agrippina, who seems to have been a perfect mistress of dissimulation, pretended the greatest affection for Britannicus, although at the same time she waited only for a proper opportunity of destroying him. Many of the chief ladies in Rome fell a victim to her jealousy, and their husbands to her revenge, because they had, consistent with their duty, endeavoured to vindicate the characters of their wives. She even caused herself to be drawn into the capital in a chariot, which gave great offence to

the people because the priests only were indulged with that privilege.

A.D. 52. As she was not ignorant that popularity might be acquired even in the midst of avarice, she persuaded the emperor to abolish some of the most oppressive taxes, and took care to have it published throughout the provinces, that it was done at the intercession of her son Nero. This was the most proper method she could make use of to ensnare, and at the same time establish his popularity; for although her own life was one continued act of dissimulation and cruelty, yet she thought her crimes would be obscured by the virtues of her son, so true is that observation of the moralist: "That although people are ever so wicked, yet they don't desire their children to copy after their example." Some of the astrologers, of which there were many in Rome, often told her that if ever her son was emperor, he would put her to death; but all the answer she made was, "That let her son be emperor, and death would be welcome to her under any shape whatever."

But notwithstanding the absolute authority with which she ruled both the emperor and empire, yet she was not without suspicion that her own person was in danger. Claudius was one night at supper heard to say, "that it was his misfortune to receive such wives that he was obliged to see them put to death." Agrippina, who was present when he uttered these words, resolved to take a most cruel revenge, and, therefore, to facilitate her purpose she procured an order, by which Narcissus was banished. Claudius was now wholly in her power, and as she did not know how soon he might make choice of another favourite, she resolved

olved to lose no time till he was removed out of the way.

The emperor was extremely fond of mushrooms, and therefore she employed one Locusta, a woman of an abandoned character, to mix poison with such as he should eat; but the strength of his constitution baffled all her attempts, till his physician, being bribed for the purpose, thrust a poisoned feather down his throat, and he died after a mean and inglorious reign.

With respect to the character of Claudius, it will be best known from the foregoing narrative. Every virtue seems to have forsaken Rome, except in the persons of a few individuals, but for all that, the terror of their arms was not in the least diminished in the provinces where many of the generals acquired new laurels; and added new conquests to the empire. Weak and dispirited as the emperor was, yet Rome was the greatest sufferer, for upon the inhabitants of that city he had a more easy opportunity of wreaking his vengeance, than upon such as lived at a distance.

However necessary it is in history to record the vices as well as the virtues of men, yet the former is always disagreeable to a mind enlivened with the principles of benevolence. We could wish to see human nature free from blame, but unhappily we are obliged to take notice of its dark as well as its fair side, and this will be verified in our account of the reign of Nero.

A. D. Agrippina, who had hitherto acted with so much dissimulation, concealed the death of the emperor till she had brought over to her party, Burrhus, the prefect of the pretorian bands, and then she ordered him, with her son Nero, to

issue forth from the gates of the palace, to receive the congratulations of the people and the army. The crowd gathered round him, and after carrying him in triumph to the head of the cohorts, he was proclaimed emperor, and his title was recognized and acknowledged by the senate. This was done in so sudden a manner, that although the people wished well to young Germanicus, yet they seemed to have forgot that he was now in the power of Agrippina, who would probably not lose so favourable an opportunity of destroying him.

The emperor Claudio was interred in the same splendid manner as Augustus, and although little better than an idiot, yet such was the meanness, or rather the madness of the people, that they ranked him among the gods, and actually paid him divine honours. Seneca drew up a funeral oration in praise of such virtues as Claudio had been an utter stranger to, and it was delivered by Nero, and received with the utmost applause by the people, who imagined it his own.

Agrippina, who by her crimes had raised her son to the throne, for some time managed all the affairs of state; and Nero submitted to her in the most dutiful manner, so that although he had the name of emperor, yet he had not the power. Indeed, it was improper that it should have been intrusted with him, for he was only seventeen years of age, and utterly unacquainted with the world.

That cruelty which had disgraced the former part of Agrippina's life, was still her ruling passion, for soon after the death of Claudio, she caused Silanus, the proconsul of Asia, to be murdered, because it was insinuated by one of her favourites, that he had spoken disrespectfully of her. Nor did she stop there, for Narcissus, the favourite of the late emperor, was

was obliged to put an end to his own life, to avoid the hands of the executioner. Seneca and Burrhus, who had still some virtue remaining in them, did all they could to put a stop to those horrid cruelties, but as nothing could be done without the sanction of the young emperor, they resolved to bring him over to their party, and set him at the head of public affairs. This succeeded according to their wishes, and the young emperor seemed to coincide so far with their determinations, that the affairs of government were conducted to the satisfaction of the people, upon principles consistent with the natural rights of mankind; so far Nero concealed the natural depravity of his heart; but while he was doing so, his passions were gaining ground, and only wanted a proper opportunity to display themselves.

Indeed, so great was the affability and condescension of Nero to all those who solicited him for favours, that the Romans began to look upon themselves as the most happy people in the world. When any of the senators flattered him, he seemed very uneasy, and desired them not to praise him till such time as his conduct should entitle him to such marks of their esteem. He would often shed tears when he signed warrants for the execution of criminals, nor did the least spirit of cruelty appear in his nature.

His mother Agrippina finding her power on the decline, lost all manner of patience, for such was her natural ambition, that sooner than be controuled in any of her actions, she would have seen the whole world destroyed. Nero had placed his affections on a young handsome slave named Acte, whom he had made free, and as Agrippina did every thing in her power to cross his inclinations, he resolved to

break

break with her altogether, and assert his right as emperor. He even went so far as to turn her chief favourite Pallas out of employment, on suspicion that he fomented divisions in the palace. This was what Agrippina could not bear, and therefore setting no bounds to her rage, she threatened to raise a party to displace her son, and set Britannicus on the throne. Nero knowing that her genius for intrigue was equal to her malice, caused the young prince Germanicus to be poisoned, and thus the principal obstacle to his safety was removed out of the way.

Nor did he stop here, for finding that his mother was endeavouring to raise a faction against him in the city, he ordered her to remove from the palace, and took her guards from her. All suspicious persons were forbidden, under the severest penalties, to visit her, so that she was little better than a prisoner. Deprived of power, all her favourites forsook her, and made their peace with the emperor, who freely forgave all that had been alledged against them. Such in general is the fate of all those who are slaves to ambition; for although they are sure of finding more friends than are necessary when in prosperity, yet no sooner do they fall into disgrace, than they are forsaken, and left a prey to melancholy and despair.

Nero was now advancing to a state of manhood, and his natural disposition that had been hitherto concealed under the mask of virtue, began to display itself in its native colours. His attendants in the palace made his passions subservient to their own interest, and they took no notice of his most vicious actions, while he continued to load them with favours. In the evenings, he would disguise himself in the habit of a slave, and go into the streets to

visit

visit the most noted brothels, where all manner of lewdness was committed. Had this been confined to his own personal conduct, the evil would have been the more easily born with ; but his example first diffused itself among the young nobility, and from them to all ranks of people, so that a universal depravity in manners took place in the city. Both sexes forgot the regard they owed to modesty and decency, while the laws were disregarded and trampled on.

While Rome, from the example of the emperor, became a scene of riot and debauchery, the provinces in general remained quiet, only some few insurrections that were quelled without much loss ; for the Roman arms were still for the most part victorious. But things now began to assume a new form, and the vices of Nero became more conspicuous than ever. He repudiated his wife Octavia, and married Poppea, a woman of a loose character, but one who seemed to suit herself to all his vices.

Agrippina, who was an enemy to Poppea, repined in secret at her advancement to such dignity, and left nothing undone to compleat her ruin, but all her schemes proved abortive, and the intended mischief turned upon herself.

Poppea began to acquire an ascendancy over Nero, which is not to be wondered at, as she was possessed of all the arts peculiar to her sex, and extremely beautiful in her person. She told Nero that he could never be safe while his mother was so near his person, and that he ought to send her to some distant province, where she would not have it in her power to do any further mischief, by disturbing his tranquility, and creating dissensions among the people. Finding Nero not averse in the least to comply with her request, she doubted not of obtaining

taining a sure victory, and therefore we find the emperor employing some of his minions to scandalize his mother in the most public manner, and to commence vexatious law-suits against her. But although this mortified her pride, and put her to a considerable expence, yet she maintained a spirit of fortitude superior to what might have been expected from one of so dissolute a life.

Nero finding all his attempts unsuccessful to depress the spirit of his mother, resolved to take her off by poison, but her jealousy of what she had reason to expect, prevented her from tasting any thing which she suspected poisonous. It was then proposed that she should remove to Calabria, with which she complied, and the sailors in their voyage thither had orders to drown her; but although she was thrown into the sea, yet she continued swimming till she was taken up by some trading vessels.

Nothing could set bounds to the rage of the emperor, when he found that his mother was still alive, and stimulated by the continual importunities of Poppea, he resolved that she should be put to death in a private manner. To give colour to so base a crime, he got it insinuated by some of his dependants, that she had a design against his life, and consulted Seneca and Burrhus in what manner to act. Seneca made no answer, but Burrhus, regardless of his own personal safety, boldly answered, "That there was not a man in the army that would ever have it imputed to him that he had shed the blood of one descended from Cæsar." Nero was disconcerted, but to relieve him from all his fears, Anicetus, who had been employed to drown Agrippina, stood up and offered his services to perform the emperor's orders. His offer was immediately accepted.

accepted, and taking with him a party of the guards, he surrounded the house of Agrippina, who had no thoughts of her life being in such eminent danger.

The time was now come that this woman should pay the debt of her crimes, but dissimulation, which had always marked her character, continued with her even to the last. Anicetus having seized on her slaves who attended her, went with two soldiers into her chamber, where they found her sitting in a seeming careless manner. She knew that they were come to destroy her, but assuming an air of indifference, told them, that if they came to enquire after her health, she was much better than she had been for some time, but if they had any bad intentions, she was willing to submit to it from them rather than from the hand of her son.

She had scarce done speaking, when one of the soldiers struck her on the head, and Anicetus drawing his sword, she pointed her bosom to him, telling him to stab her there, as that bosom had nourished a monster ; she was immediately dispatched, and next day Nero made a speech in the senate, vindicating his own conduct, by telling them, that he was under an absolute necessity, either of putting her to death, or suffering himself to be destroyed by the schemes she had hatched. Many ridiculous stories have been inserted in the writings of the Roman historians concerning this barbarous action, as how Nero went and viewed the mangled body of his mother, and taking notice to those who attended him, that he did not imagine she was such a fine woman ; but these seem to be mere exaggerations, for which there was no manner of reason, for Nero was guilty of too many real crimes, without adding to them such as were imaginary.

Every

Every obstacle being now removed out of the way, Nero proceeded to greater lengths in wickedness than he had hitherto attempted. One would have thought that his actions had already been as disgraceful as one would expect to meet with in history; but for all that, he was only in the infancy of his crimes. His fondness even for the softest pleasures did not divest him of cruelty, for he joined both together in such a manner, that while he enjoyed the one, he sought after the other. He even exhibited in person at the public games, contrary to the advice of his best friends, and his passion for music was so great, that although not a master of it, yet he attempted to play on all sorts of instruments. He had read the poets, and he imagined he could excel the most celebrated among them, but his natural indolence prevented him from study. Some court sycophants composed rhymes, which he repeated in public as his own, and although most of them were beneath contempt itself, yet there were not wanting many about his person who repeated them as superior to any thing written, either by Homer or Virgil. Such in general is the fate of weak and vicious princes; they seldom see with their own eyes, and being blinded by their pride and other ungovernable passions, they shut their eyes to the truth, and freedom is considered by them as little better than treason. Confined to their palaces among those who for their own interest are obliged to flatter their grossest crimes; they remain in a state of ignorance, nor are their characters known till history strips off the mask.

LETTER

LETTER XLIV.

NERO, who had hitherto continued to grow in the practice of the most abandoned crimes, considered Rome as too contracted a scene for him to appear in. Destitute of self-knowledge, he looked upon himself as an object that ought to claim the sole attention of nations as well as of individuals.

Infatuated by such notions, he resolved to visit the most celebrated places in the empire, and accordingly set out for Naples. There he exhibited in public as a singer, and that he might procure the public applause, he bribed the most insignificant and by his menaces prevented the most celebrated performers from coming on the stage. Indeed, the whole of his conduct was of so ridiculous, and such an unheard of nature, that the people began to look upon him with the utmost contempt.

Having thus made himself ridiculous to every sober, sensible person in Naples, he resolved to visit Greece. He was induced to undertake this romantic journey in consequence of some Greek ambassadors, who having been with him at Rome, desired to hear him sing, and although they knew him to be destitute of any knowledge in music, yet they were crafty and insinuating enough to tell him that he excelled the most celebrated performers on the Grecian stage.

This flattering declaration, as absurd as false, made Nero declare that the Greeks alone were judges of real merit, and therefore he set out for that celebrated country, where he spent upwards of a whole year. While he remained in Greece, he exhibited at the Olympic games, by driving a chariot with ten horses,

horses, but his constitution was too feeble by effeminacy to sustain so violent a motion, so that he was thrown from his seat.

His rank, however, procured him that applause which his merit could never have entitled him to, and in the same manner he was crowned conqueror at all the other games. One day a celebrated singer happened to oppose him, but whatever might be his merit, certain it is, he had not too large a share of prudence, for the tyrant caused one of the soldiers to stab him dead in the theatre. Leaving Greece, he returned to Naples, and consistent with the manner of honouring those who exhibited at the Olympic games, and had been crowned conquerors, he entered the city through a breach made in the wall. At Rome he was met by all ranks of people, some thousands of slaves followed the chariot of Augustus, in which he rode, and the whole streets of the city were strewed with flowers; so much were the Roman people sunk beneath the dignity of their ancestors.

These ridiculous diversions, however, although beneath the dignity of a rational creature, and much more that of an emperor, where but trifles when compared to his most horrid cruelties. Neither virtue nor fidelity could preserve the most respectable characters from destruction, for his own guilt made him suspicious of every one, and his cruelty was such, that if once accused, though ever so falsely, they had no reason to expect the least mercy. All his mother's favourites were put to death along with Domitia, his aunt, and several Roman senators, although nothing of a criminal nature was proved against them; but tyrants are never in want of excuses to colour over their most odious crimes.

Octavia.

IN A SERIES OF LETTERS. 115

A. D. Octavia was put to death on suspicion of
63 her having conspired against him, and Pop-
pea, who had long been mistress of his af-
fections, was declared empress in the most solemn
manner. From crimes that may be committed con-
sistent with the corruption of nature, he launched
into those that were unnatural, and justly held in
abomination by every person who wishes well to
society. He dressed himself in the habit of a woman,
and besides committing such crimes as ought not to
be mentioned, he became still more detestable, by
keeping a youth whom he had ordered to be
castrated, and whom he obliged the people to honour
with the name of his wife, so lost was he to all
sense of shame and decency.

In company with this youth, he appeared in all
public places, and in the sight of the people, treated
him as if he had been a woman. Many sarcasms
were thrown out upon him by the wits of those
times, some of whom observed, that it would have
been happy for the world, had the emperor's father
had such a wife as he had made choice of. He did
not desire respect, much less the affections of the
people, but chose rather to be hated than loved.

Of this he gave a most shocking instance, for the
city was set on fire, and almost reduced to ashes,
and according to the testimonies of most historians,
it was done by the emperor's orders. No person was
permitted to assist the sufferers, and as the Christians
were then numerous in Rome, a report was in-
dustriously spread, that they were the incendiaries.
This occasioned a most cruel persecution against
those innocent people, not only in Rome, but like-
wise throughout many of the provinces. Some of
them were crucified in imitation of their divine
master, others were chained to stakes and burnt
alive,

alive, and many were cloathed in skins of wild beasts and devoured by dogs kept hungry for that purpose, while the emperor, from the window of his palace beheld these horrid cruelties with a savage pleasure, (if that can be called pleasure that must always be shocking to human nature.) Among those who suffered death was the Apostle Paul, who, because he was a Roman, was only beheaded: according to Eusebius St. Peter was crucified with his head downwards; but this part is doubtful, for we are not certain that he ever was at Rome.

While he was going on in this manner, a conspiracy was formed against him by Piso, a Roman nobleman, who beheld his fellow-citizens treated worse than if they had been dogs. The conspiracy being almost ripe for execution, it was discovered by one Volusius, a tribune, who had received an account of it from Epicharius, a courtezan. The chiefs of the conspirators were immediately seized and put to the torture, upon which Natalis confessed his guilt, and accused several of his accomplices. Among those apprehended on that fatal affair was Lucan the poet, who gave in a list of many innocent persons as guilty, among whom was his own mother, Attilia. Many of those innocent persons were put to the rack; and as Epicharius had inadvertently discovered the plot, she was tortured in the cruelest manner, but nothing could force any confession from her; for it must be remembered that she had first discovered the affair to Volusius, the tribune, thinking that he would be thereby brought into the conspiracy. This woman with a fortitude superior to the weakness of her sex, declared that if they should continue their torture to the last, she would not accuse her friends, and next

night

night she strangled herself in the prison. Seneca the great philosopher was accused of being concerned in this conspiracy, and although there was not the least proof of his guilt, yet he was ordered to chuse his own death, which was executed by opening the veins of his legs and arms. His wife attempted to imitate him, but after she had bled sometime, her servants prevented her from going any further.

Seneca met death with that fortitude that might have been expected in so great a man; and during his last agonies he dictated a discourse on immortality to his secretary, but unhappily it has not been transmitted to us. Lucan suffered in the same manner, and when he found himself growing weak with the loss of blood, he repeated about ten lines of his poem, called *Pharsalia*, and then expired with the utmost composure.

While these cruelties were daily practising, those who lived in the provinces were not in a much better condition. The Parthians revolted on account of some severities they had suffered from the Romans, but after several engagements they were again obliged to submit to such terms as Nero thought proper to grant them.

The governors in the provinces were found to have been equally cruel with their master, for the Jews were oppressed in such a manner that they took up arms, upon which several legions were sent to oppose them. Indeed the destruction of that unhappy people, as foretold by our Saviour, was now approaching, but as it was not completed in this reign, I shall take more notice of it afterwards.

But of all those who suffered under Nero in the provinces, the Britons had the largest share. Paulinus

linus was then governor in this island, and some of his tribunes having treated Boadicia, queen of the Iceni, with the utmost indignity, she raised an army and destroyed the cities of London and Verulum, causing all the Romans that fell into her hands to be murdered. Paulinus was then in a distant part of the island ; but no sooner had he heard of the revolt of the Britons, than he hastened against them, and a most bloody battle ensued, in which the Romans were victorious. Seventy thousand of the Britons were left dead on the spot, and Boadicia, who could not endure the loss of her honour, put an end to her own life.

A. D. Nero seemed as if his sole intention had been to destroy every man endowed with merit or virtue in Rome, and the number of celebrated persons who fell victims to this cruelty would seem incredible were it not attested by the evidence of Tacitus, and many other grave historians, who lived in or near those periods. Pompea the Empress, either having done or said something to displease him, he gave her so violent a kick on the belly that it brought on an abortion, and put an end to her life.

His crimes were now grown to such an enormous height that he seemed ripe for destruction, and to bring about an event so apparently beneficial to the empire ; the provinces seemed unanimous in extirpating from the world a wretch, who was a disgrace to human nature in its most corrupted state. Julius Vindex, who commanded the legions in Gaul, declared that he would no longer bear with the oppressive conduct of the emperor, and actually offered leave for any man to cut off his own head, upon condition they should bring him that of Nero's. He courted the assistance of

Sergius

Sergius Galba, who commanded in Spain, but he was rather fearful lest their attempt should have no better success than that undertaken by Piso.

But although an account of those dangerous combinations were transmitted to Nero, yet he was so lost in sensuality, that he paid no regard to them, all he wished for being only an opportunity of seeing some new public insurrection, and enjoying the treasures that would arise from the sale of the conspirators effects. But to complete his ruin, news were brought him that Galba had joined in the conspiracy, upon which he was so overpowered with surprize and grief that he fainted away while sitting at supper with his favourites. He had no sooner recovered than he raged like a madman, crying out that, now he was undone, and threatened to turn out the wild beasts to destroy such of the citizens as came in their way.

His whole hopes were centered in Virginius Rufus, who commanded an army in Germany, and he having made an incursion into Gaul, Vindex was defeated and there laid violent hands on himself. But Nero's hopes soon vanished, upon which he resolved to seek shelter in Egypt. For that purpose he ordered a fleet to be fitted out at Ostia, but most of his friends refused to accompany him.

In that distracted situation, not knowing what to do, he went to sleep, but when he awoke, he found himself deserted by his soldiers, who had gone off in a body and proclaimed Galba emperor. Nero left the palace in a state of despair, and mounted on horseback, resolved to shelter himself in the house of one of his domestics, about four miles from Rome, where he stabbed himself in the throat

and

and expired just as the soldiers who had been sent after him arrived.

The characters of princes are best known by their actions, and few ever disgraced human nature more than Nero. He was only in his thirty-second year when he died, and although his reign did not amount to fourteen years, yet he committed more crimes than would have disgraced a reign of a thousand. He had a vain head and a corrupt heart. He had no pleasure in any thing that could procure him either honour or respect, and has he lived hated, so he died unlamented, or rather his death was considered as one of the happiest events that could have taken place.

A. D. Galba, now upwards of seventy years 69. of age, was on his march towards Rome, when he heard an account of the defeat and death of Vindex, which in a great measure damped his spirits, and made him wish that the soldiers would relinquish the choice they had made of him to be emperor, and give that honour to another. He was grown old in the service of the commonwealth, and would have rather ended his life in the camp, than embarrass himself in the affairs of government, to which he was almost a stranger. But while he was deliberating in his mind what to do, he received the agreeable news that Nero was dead, and continuing his march towards Rome was met by many of the nobility, who all acknowledged him emperor, and promised to yield him the most implicit obedience, among whom were the chief favourites of the late emperor, who by courting the favour of Galba thought to screen themselves from justice.

Galba was one of the most unfit persons to govern the empire that possibly could have been found;

found ; and although he was raised to the purple by the soldiers, yet he began his reign by doing all in his power to disoblige them. A numerous body of sailors, whom Nero had incorporated with the legions, came forward to meet him near Rome, and demanded a confirmation of the privileges he had conferred on them. Galba refusing to give them a satisfactory answer, they proceeded to threats, upon which he ordered a body of cavalry to attack them, and seven thousand were left dead on the spot.

This did not so much displease the army because they hated the sailors, but his next act gave them more offence, although it was not attended with so much cruelty. The former emperors in order to protect their persons from conspiracies, had kept a guard of German cohorts : but although nothing could be alledged against them, yet they were sent home to their own country, in a starving condition, without receiving their legal wages.

Accustomed to the hardships of war, and long inured to camps, where few delicacies are known, he resolved to reform the Romans from that state of luxury into which they were sunk ; but this part of his conduct was too violently begun to have the desired success, or be attended with any beneficial consequences. The citizens reported him as a slave to avarice, and because he lived in the most frugal manner, satires were daily published, ridiculing his conduct, and in a short time he lost all that popularity which had formerly marked his character.

Avarice, however, was not the only vice imputed to Galba, for soon after he had taken upon him the government, he ordered Patronius, Locusta, Elius, and Polycletus, to be led in chains

through the city, and then to be executed in public. It is true those men had made themselves odious to the people, but cruelty is not the act of a generous mind. Many of the Romans who hated their crimes, yet pitied their sufferings; but that which increased their indignation more than any thing was, that Tigelinus, Nero's chief favourite escaped along with Helotus a slave, and a eunuch, who had both purchased their pardon with money.

Galba sinking under the decay of nature, committed the office of administration to three men of the most abandoned characters, who did every thing in their power to oppress the people. Caius Laco, praefect of the praetorian guards, Icelus, his freed man, and Titus Venius, who had acted as his lieutenant, in Spain, were the favourites in whom he placed all his confidence.

These men being of tempers and dispositions totally opposite to each other, led the emperor to disannul one day what he had done the preceding, so that his character became truly ridiculous. All punishments, fines, and imprisonments were decided by the favourites, according to their different inclinations, offices of honour and profit were sold to those who bid most for them, and the most notorious criminal could escape justice if he had only money sufficient to purchase his pardon.

Nor was it much better in the provinces, especially among the soldiers, who looked with envy upon Galba, because he had been raised to the empire by those under his command in Spain, without soliciting the countenance of such as were in other parts. Such as were then in Germany sent notice to the praetorian bands that they would never acknowledge an emperor who had been chosen without

out their consent, and insisted that the senate should proceed to a new election.

This was an alarming circumstance to Galba, whose ignorance of government, and the infirmities of old age, rendered incapable of acting becoming his dignity. He had no children of his own, and therefore, in order to quell the fears and jealousies of the people, as well as those of the army, he resolved, consistent with the Roman method, to adopt one.

This measure occasioned a private consultation among his favourites, who each had separate interests, and what was proposed by the one was opposed by the others.

After much altercation, Galba made choice of Piso to be his heir, a man possessed of all those qualities requisite to discharge the duties of a Roman emperor; nor was he less engaging in his manners as a private man than celebrated for his knowledge of public affairs. But the manners of the people as well as the soldiers and senators, were so corrupted, that they seemed unanimous in their disapprobation of the choice, because they had not been bribed in the usual manner.

While affairs were conducted in this manner at Rome, the soldiers in the different provinces were entering into combinations to set their respective commanders on the throne. The election of Galba had set them an example, and the senate was only regarded in name.

Otho had done every thing in his power to be adopted by Galba, as his successor; but finding he could not succeed, he had recourse to the soldiers, with whom he was a favourite. His circumstances were desperate, for he had spent most of his fortune in prodigality; but having by the assistance of some

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friends raised a considerable sum of money, he corrupted by bribery a great part of the soldiers, taking care at the same time to make them promises of large rewards if they stood by him.

He addressed himself to them in a speech composed for the occasion, setting forth all the cruelties that had been committed by Galba, and pointing out the necessity they were under to proceed to the choice of a new emperor. The soldiers, whom he had already prepared for his purpose, immediately took him upon their shoulders, and carried him in triumph to the camp, where they proclaimed him emperor. Galba hearing what was done in the camp, dressed himself in his armour, and at the head of a body of cavalry, rushed into the forum, where he was met by a party of those sent from Otho, who struck off his head, and carried it on a pole as a trophy to their commander.

Such was the end of Galba, a man properly qualified to command an army, but utterly unfit for governing an empire. Had he died in the camp, his memory would have been treated with honour, but all his former virtues were obscured, by entrusting the affairs of government to favourites, whose minds were attached to vice, and who had no regard for the interests of the republic. He had served from his most early youth in the army, and was respected by the soldiers; but a short reign of seven months has transmitted his name to posterity with infamy.

A. D. On this occasion the Romans gave a striking proof of the corruption into which all ranks of them had sunk, for from the senators down to the lowest among the citizens, each strove to be first to the camp, to acknowledge Otho as emperor. So fluctuating are the minds of the people, and so little regard ought to be paid to the applauses

applauses of the multitude, unless a consciousness of virtue remains in the breast of the person who is the object of it.

Otho was not insensible of the necessity he was under to court the applauses of the people, and therefore, in order to give them a striking proof of his clemency, his first public act was to grant a pardon to Marius Celsus, a person whom Galba had reposed the utmost confidence in.

Nay, he even loaded him with honours, and advanced him to a place of great trust and profit, taking notice that his fidelity to his master deserved such rewards. Nor did he stop here, for finding the public clamour rising high against Tigellinus, the favourite of Nero, and the instrument of all his cruelties, he was put to death in the most public manner, and all those who had been unjustly banished, were restored to their families and possessions. But all those acts, by which he strove to procure public favour, could not support him on the throne. A dangerous precedent had been set to the soldiers by the election of Galba, and mutual jealousy took place in the army.

Vitellius, who commanded in the Lower Germany, had acquired the good will of the legions under his command, and therefore they publicly proclaimed him emperor, without any regard to the approbation of the senate. News of this being transmitted to Rome, Otho was sensibly affected thereby, for whatever might have been his vices while in a private station, certain it is, that as soon as he was raised to the purple, a reformation seemed to take place in the whole of his conduct; nor did he desire any thing superior to that of promoting the interests of the republic, and making the people happy.

He lamented to think his country was again to be involved in a civil war, at a time when he intended to rectify every abuse, and put an end to civil dissensions. For that purpose he sent deputies to Vitellius, proposing terms of accomodation; but all his offers being rejected, both parties proposed to take the field.

Vitellius continued his march to Italy, and Otho set out to meet him at the head of a numerous army, but such of the senators and knights, from whom he had reason to expect advice and assistance, were too much sunk in luxury to pay any regard to the interests of their country.

Otho was sensible of his distressed circumstances; for although his army was numerous, yet few of them were acquainted with military discipline, and those whom they were to oppose, had been long accustomed to all the hardships of the camp. Superstition, likewise, operated on his mind in so forcible a manner, that he was frightened in his dreams, and the most trifling incident appeared as a fatal omen. But still he did all in his power to conceal the dejection that hung upon his countenance, and therefore marched towards the city of Brixellum, near the river Po. There he remained, sending the army before him, under the command of his two lieutenants, Celsus and Suetonius, to oppose Valus and Cecina, whom Vitellius had ordered to march against him while he remained in Gaul, collecting as many forces as he could raise.

LETTER

LETTER XLV.

THE people waited with impatience to see the event of a battle which was to decide the fate of the contending parties, and both armies met with such resolution as if their intention had been either to conquer or die. Several attacks were made by the detached parties of both sides, but there being a necessity that both should come to a general engagement, Otho put himself at the head of his forces, near a small village called Bebriacum, where he called his officers together, in order to hear their opinions concerning the most proper methods for him to take.

Those who were most experienced in military affairs, proposed to keep fighting in detached parties, in order to distress the enemy as much as possible; but their opinion was violently opposed by the young Romans, whose impatience was equal to their imprudence, and who thought themselves sure of victory, because of their numbers.

Whether Otho was a man of personal courage does not appear, but either by the advice of his favourites, or by his own desire, he retired to Brixellum, while his generals were making proper dispositions to engage. The field of battle was the worst that could have been made choice of; for many trees grew upon it; but at first Otho's men broke through the first line, and took the eagle from the enemy, and this was looked upon as a favourable omen, if not a sure presage of victory. But these hopes soon vanished, for the legions who had fought under Vitellius, were well acquainted with discipline, and as they had been long inured to hardship, that they soon became

masters of the field, while Otho's men fled in great confusion, and a most dreadful slaughter ensued.

The news of the defeat of the army was brought him by a common soldier, who had escaped from the pursuers; but his flatterers endeavoured to persuade him that the fellow had only fled to save himself, upon which the brave soldier fell upon his sword and killed himself. The emperor was struck with the courage of the soldier, and now he began to find that he had been fed with false hopes, by those who pretended to be his friends.

He then addressed himself to his favourites, and told them, that ever since he had been advanced to the purple, his sole ambition had been to make the people happy; but as it was evident fortune was against him, he was willing to submit to his fate like a Roman, and not bring any dishonour upon his family or country. He advised them to make their peace with Vitellius, and not continue in arms, lest he should be provoked to take a cruel revenge.

Having done speaking, he retired to his chamber, where he wrote two letters to his sister, and one to Messalina, a young lady, to whom he was to have been married, had he returned victorious. He burnt all such letters as by falling into the enemy's hands, might be an injury to his friends, and then resolved to die by his own sword. At that instant, a tumult arising among the soldiers, he went out among them in order to accommodate matters, which having effected, he retired to his chamber, and lay down to sleep with a sharpened dagger under his pillow. About day-break he awoke, and seizing the dagger, stabbed himself under his left side, and ended his life without a groan, after a short reign of three months and five days. With respect to his character, it was of a very abandoned nature, while he lived in a

private

private station, but short as his reign was, great hopes were conceived of him, and there is reason to think, that had he lived longer, he would have been an ornament and honour to his country.

A. D. 70. The soldiers who had fought under the emperor Otho, finding themselves without a head, wept and begged that Virginius, the commander of the German legions, would intercede with Vitellius in their favour; but he not chusing to comply with their request, they put themselves under the command of Rubrius Gallus, a person of great merit, who prevailed upon Vitellius to grant them a free pardon. In the mean time the senate, who always took part with such as were victorious, acknowledged Vitellius as emperor; but they had soon reason to repent of their conduct; for the soldiers under his command committed the most horrid outrages on the people of Italy, whom they considered as their enemies. The decree of the senate having been transmitted to Vitellius, who was yet in Gaul, he gave a striking instance of his cruelty, by disarming the prætorian cohorts, and putting to death one hundred and fifty of them, who had been active in some late disturbances. He then set out for Rome, attended by a numerous retinue, and as he passed through the different towns, he made the most splendid appearance. When he came to the field where Otho's army was defeated, and saw the putrified carcases of men and horses, whose smell was sufficient to have created an infection, he seemed greatly pleased, and calling for wine, drank of it, and ordered some to be given to his soldiers.

He entered into the city of Rome in a manner different from those who had before worn the purple, for he looked upon the whole empire as his own, by conquest.

conquest. Custom obliged him to go to the senate, but although he pretended to thank them for choosing him emperor, yet the greatest part of his speech was taken up in setting off his many services to the republic, and though without a title, yet he had a right to govern in preference to all others.

The soldiers who had fought under him in Gaul and Germany, had been inured to so many hardships, that the pleasures of Rome, to which they gave themselves up in the most licentious manner, rendered them utterly unfit for war, while all offices of trust or profit, were given to such time-serving wretches as flattered the emperor's vanity. Indeed, Vitellius set the example to his soldiers, for he gave such a loose to debauchery, that he was continually drunk, and every day was spent in one entertainment or other. Such as could invent any species of new luxury, was sure to obtain a large share of his favour, and rewards were heaped upon those who ought to have been made examples of public justice.

At one entertainment provided for him by his brother, who seems to have been as voluptuous a wretch as himself, there were seven thousand fowls and two thousand fishes of all sorts that could be found, besides many other dainties, too ridiculous to be mentioned. Nay, we are told by some historians, that had he lived much longer, the whole empire would not have been sufficient to support his extravagance; but his unbounded liberality brought on want; for his needy favourites were continually soliciting him for a share of the public money, and as he considered himself as still at the head of the army, so he continued to grant all their requests.

If any person to whom he had been formerly indebted came to demand the money due to them, they were

they were sure to be put to death. One of those unfortunate persons being summoned before him for having demanded a debt due to him, his two sons came to intercede for him, but the emperor, instead of paying any regard to what they urged in behalf of their father, ordered all three to be put to death. At another time, when one of the Roman knights was condemned to suffer, he told the emperor that he had made him his heir, upon which Vitellius demanded to see the will, and finding another person joined with him as co-heir, both were instantly put to death, that he might enjoy the whole.

Such inhuman actions made him an object of detestation to every person who wished well to the interests of the people, and the few sober hours that he enjoyed, made him even odious to himself. His fears were increased by the predictions of the astrologers, who stuck up prayers in every public place in the city, commanding him to die before the calends of October. It is not to be supposed that those men could foretell future events, but they were sensible, that the emperor could not long prevent his own destruction, unless he made a total change in his conduct, and of that there was but very little hopes. These predictions drove him to a state of madness; for he ordered all the astrologers to be banished from Rome, and as some of them had foretold that if he survived his mother, he would be happy many years, he resolved to starve her to death, or at least to deprive her of such resources as would serve to prolong her life.

But all these precautions to secure his wretched life, proved ineffectual, for his own example having corrupted the soldiers, they began to mutiny, and wishing for a new emperor, resolved to place Vespasian on the throne. Vespasian, who had acquired

great

great honour from his knowledge in military affairs, had been sent by Nero against the Jews, and news was brought him of the death of that emperor, just at the time that he was going to lay siege to Jerusalem. He had continued neuter during the reigns of Galba and Otho, rightly imagining that they would not long enjoy the purple; but no sooner did he hear that Vitellius was raised to the throne, than he declared himself for him.

As he had not received any orders in what manner he was to act against the Jews after the death of Nero, he went to Alexandria, where he had not been long, when the army, with whom he was a great favourite, proclaimed him emperor. However ambitious Vespasian might be to enjoy such an high honour as that of emperor, yet he seemed reluctant to accept of it, till the soldiers threatened him with immediate death, if he continued to despise and reject their choice. This induced him to call a council of war, wherein it was resolved on, that Titus, son of Vespasian, should carry on the war against the Jews, while he raised forces in the east, in order to take possession of the empire, and that Mutianus, one of his generals, should be sent at the head of some legions to Italy, in order to sound the inclinations of the people, and discover whether Vitellius was as odious to them as had been represented.

It was not long before Vitellius received news of the soldiers having made choice of Vespasian to be emperor; but although he knew that Italy would soon be invaded by an armed force, yet such was his sloth and indolence, that he seemed to take very little notice of it.

Antonius Primus entered Italy at the head of some legions, and was met at Cremona by Valus and

and Cecinna; but instead of coming to a general engagement, Cecinna revolted, and went over to join the forces belonging to Vespasian. However, having considered his conduct as too rash, he resumed his former station, and a bloody battle ensued, which lasted till night without any thing decisive being done, and when both parties began to renew the charge in the morning, the legions under the command of Cecinna, were struck with a panic and fled in great disorder, leaving thirty thousand dead on the field. They then ordered their general Cecinna to intercede for them with the conqueror, who granted them a free pardon; but many of the citizens of Cremona were murdered in the most barbarous manner, for no other reason but that they had opened their gates to the vanquished. News of the defeat of his army was brought to Vitellius at Rome, while he was indulging himself in all sorts of luxury, and then instead of going in person to retrieve his loss, he gave himself up to fear and cowardice. Two of his generals, Alphenus Varus and Julius Priscus, were ordered to go at the head of an army of observation, to guard all the passes of the Appenines, in order if possible to prevent the enemy's taking possession of Rome.

At last the clamours of the people run so high against him, that in order to repair his disgrace, he set out to take upon him the command of the army, but that rather did him injury than any real service. The soldiers looked upon him with contempt, and to complete his misfortunes, news was brought him that his whole fleet had declared for Vespasian. Weak, luxurious, and dispirited, he left the camp, and returned to Rome, from whence he sent messengers to offer terms of accommodation to Vespasian, offering to resign the throne upon condition his life was

was spared, and some small allowance granted to support him. Sabinus, one of his favourites, having advised Vitellus to resign, his counsel was slighted; upon which, in a fit of rage, he seized on the capitol, but the emperor's guards having attacked that most beautiful structure, the whole was in a few hours consumed to ashes.

Many persons of distinction, besides others, perished in the flames; and Sabinus being taken prisoner, was, by the emperor's order put to death, and all the others who had the misfortune to be made prisoners were butchered in the most cruel manner. At last Antonius, Vespasian's general, attacked the city of Rome, and although Vitellus's soldiers made a brave defence, yet the gates were stormed, and one universal scene of slaughter ensued. This happened at a time when the citizens, regardless of their fate, were rioting in such scenes of debauchery as are a disgrace to human nature. Mangled bodies were lying in the same streets where the people were either drinking to excess, or sleeping in the arms of harlots, from which we may naturally draw this conclusion, that the Roman people were then strangers both to public and private virtue.

During this dreadful scene of confusion, Vitellus had some thoughts of saving himself by flight, but being altogether weak and dispirited, he hid himself in an obscure corner of his palace, where he was found by some of the victorious soldiers, and dragged out into the streets. He begged in the most abject manner that they would spare his life till the arrival of Vespasian; but they paid no regard to his intreaties, for tying his hands behind his back, and his hair backwards, marks of disgrace usually put upon the most notorious malefactors,

tors, they led him through the most public streets, holding the point of a spear under his chin, lest he should endeavour to conceal his face. The populace who abhorred him to the utmost degree, threw dirt at him as he was led along, while others struck him with their hands, and some mocked him because of his corpulency.

Having thus gratified their resentment against the most wretched prince that ever set upon a throne, they put an end to his miserable life, and to complete their savage triumph, his body was dragged through the streets and then thrown into the Tiber. Such was the end of Vitellus in the fifty-seventh year of his age, after a short reign of little more than eight months. Some of the emperors who had reigned before him had begun their reigns with acts of clemency, particularly Nero and Caligula, but this wretch gave a scope to his passions at once, without ever considering that he would one day be made a public example to satisfy the rage of those people whom he had so basely injured by trampling on their just rights and privileges.

A. D. As soon as the voluptuous emperor Vitellius was no more, the city of Rome

70. exhibited such a dismal scene as is shocking to human nature, for in the streets nothing was to be seen but the mangled bodies of those who had been murdered in the most licentious manner by the soldiers. Neither age nor sex could protect the innocent from the merciless rage of the soldiers, for their houses were plundered and themselves dragged out and then murdered in the streets. The rabble ever ready to take part in any insurrection, gave all the assistance they could to the soldiers, for they directed them to the houses of those who were

were supposed to be possessed of most money, while the slaves, impatient of restraint, joined the populace, and pointed out to them the places where their masters effects were concealed. In a word, nothing could equal the distresses of the citizens, nor was any thing to be heard in the streets but lamentation and mourning by those who had lost their nearest relations, and were ready to lay violent hands on themselves.

Nature now seemed to be deficient in finding new objects for the ferocious soldiers, and the licentious rabble to wreak their vengeance upon, and therefore upon the arrival of Mutianus, the general of Vespasian, a stop was put to these disorders, and tranquility began to take place of riot, murder, and bloodshed. The people wished for a new emperor, who by a prudent conduct would heal their bleeding wounds, and restore them to that peace which they had so long sought for in vain.

As the whole body of people as well as the senate were unanimous in the choice of Vespasian to be emperor, so messengers were sent to him in Egypt, requesting his immediate appearance in Rome, in order to take upon himself the government of the empire. But the winter being extremely severe, and there being several dissensions among the soldiers, he resolved to defer his voyage sometime longer. Claudius Civilis who commanded in Lower Germany, had so far ingratiated himself with the soldiers, that he threw off all subjection to the senate, and advanced at the head of a considerable army, to engage with Cerealis, the general of Vespasian. Several engagements ensued with various success, and although Cerealis was in general victorious, yet such were the intestine

festine divisions in the Roman empire, and so many incursions were daily made by the barbarians, that Civilius obtained a free pardon both for himself and the troops that served under him.

In the mean time, to encrease the general calamity, the Sarmatians, a hardy, warlike, and barbarous people, made several incursions into the Roman empire, and put several of the garrisons to the sword. Rubrius Gallus, who acted as lieutenant to Vespasian in the East, made several attempts to repell these hardy invaders, but although the Roman discipline overcame their natural courage, yet nothing could totally subdue them, for they continued to increase so fast in numbers that till the final dissolution of the Roman empire, they never ceased to make frequent incursions into the provinces, carrying along with them fire and sword.

Vespasian, who now considered it his duty to repair to Italy, left Egypt some few months after he had received an invitation from the senate, and was met several miles from Rome by a vast concourse of people, who congratulated him upon his new dignity, and promised themselves uninterrupted happiness, from his prudence and moderation. For once they were not wrong in the conjectures they had formed, for Vespasian intending to profit by the misconduct of his predecessors, set the citizens an example of sobriety and virtue, and endeavoured to reform by lenient measures all such abuses as had crept into the state.

Nor was his clemency less remarkable, for he granted a free pardon to those who had taken up arms against him, well knowing, that during the distractions that often take place in a commonwealth, many persons are obliged to take part with that

that side with which they have no connexion, but only to promote their own interest, and preserve their privileges. In such cases the most virtuous know not whom to declare for, and if they remain neutral, they are considered as enemies to both. This consideration should have great weight with conquerors, and at such times prevent them from wreaking their vengeance on those, whose interests, at least, according to the best of their judgment, induced them to join with the unfortunate party. Such were the principles upon which Vespasian began his reign, and how far his subsequent conduct was consistent therewith, will appear in the course of these letters.

Having thus conducted Vespasian to Rome, where he was invested with the ensigns of regal authority, we shall now return to his son Titus, who was left to carry on the war against the Jews. The character of Titus, as one of the most benevolent princes that ever lived, will appear hereafter, and although he received provocations of a very aggravating nature from the Jews, yet his natural clemency never forsook him, for opposition, and ingratitude served rather to humanize than harden his mind.

The Jews, the most antient, and the most venerable people at that time in the world, seemed eager to meet their own destruction. Josephus tells us, that they had arrived to such a height of impiety, that if a foreign enemy had not come to execute the vengeance of heaven upon them, they would have put an end to their own existence. Ignorant of their own religion, they had crucified the Lord of Glory, and vainly imagining that they were still the favourites of heaven, they imagined that God would in a miraculous manner deliver them from

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the power of the Romans. Simon and John, two of the most active among them, put themselves at the head of different parties, and as they were most inveterate against each other, so they spread desolation wherever they came. Jerusalem was filled with murder and bloodshed, from the one end to the other, and as our Saviour had foretold, all social obligations were forgotten, and those who were most nearly allied, became the severest enemies to each other.

Such was the miserable unhappy situation of Jerusalem when the amiable Titus took upon him the command of the legions in the room of his father. He had offered them every term of accommodation, and would have granted those who were in arms a free pardon, but they laboured under a penal infatuation, for the time of their destruction was come.

Titus approached the walls of that celebrated city just at the time the people were going to celebrate the feast of the passover, and then it was filled with all those who had come from different parts to be present at the solemnity. Every house was full, nor could it be supposed that the Jews, notwithstanding that obstinacy for which they had been so long held in detestation by the Romans, would be able to hold out many days. The intestine divisions that had so long reigned among the Jews seemed for some time to have been forgotten, and both parties, or rather all parties, however inveterate against each other, joined in one common interest in order to oppose the Romans.

Accordingly they made a most furious sally upon the besiegers, and being in a manner driven to despair, they fought with such courage, even bordering upon madness, that Titus was obliged to retreat

retreat, lest his whole army should have been cut in pieces. The Jews elated with what they thought a complete victory, returned to the city, and there commenced hostilities against each other, for to such a state of madness were they now driven that they must either kill or be killed.

In the mean time, Titus having rallied his army put them in mind of the disgrace they would bring upon the Roman eagles if they suffered themselves to be thus put to the flight in so shameful a manner, upon every trifling occasion. He put them in mind of the distracted state into which the Jews had thrown themselves by their own intestine divisions, and pointed out the glory that would attend their having subdued a people who trusted more in their gods for success, than in either conduct or personal courage. The soldiers promised to follow their commander, wherever he should lead them, and accordingly a most furious attack was made upon the outer walls.

Titus, whose clemency was his most predominant virtue, sent several messengers to the Jews, offering them the most advantageous terms of peace, but they were so infatuated that they considered all his concessions as so many marks of cowardice, and therefore dismissed his offers with contempt.

Jerusalem was surrounded by three walls, two of which Titus had broken down, but still being willing to prevent the effusion of human blood, he sent Josephus who was a Jew, to endeavour, if possible, to persuade his countrymen to harken to the voice of reason ; but all was in vain, for they treated him with the utmost contempt, and represented him as one, who in order to ingratiate himself with the Romans, had been an enemy to his own

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own country, and wanted to destroy those rights and privileges which they had so long enjoyed.

Josephus having related to Titus the manner in which he was treated by his countrymen, a council of war was immediately called, in which it was declared that a trench should be thrown up around the city to prevent the people from receiving any supply of provisions. One would have thought that the appearance of immediate famine would have brought those obstinate people to harken to the voice of reason, but all in vain, for the nearer their destruction appeared, the less care they took to preserve themselves. Famine, with all its dreadful consequences, now raged in every part of Jerusalem. The common provisions were spent, and even horses dung was sold to some of the most wealthy, after all the dead dogs and cats had been greedily devoured. Nay we are told by Josephus, that women killed their own children in order to allay the cravings of hunger, while some drawed lots which should first be made use of to supply those who were in want of natural food. The Jews who had long deceived themselves with false hopes, were now driven to a state of despair, and Titus having made a breach in the inner wall proceeded as far as the temple, where he was met by a large body of the Jews. His design was to have saved the temple, but a soldier having thrown a firebrand into it, the whole structure became one blaze, while some of the most superstitious violently threw themselves into the flames, saying, "why should we live any longer after our temple is destroyed, and our city, the queen of nations, taken by the Romans."

L E T.

LETTER XLVI.

FEW people ever sold their liberties dearer than the Jews, for such as had escaped the sword in the city, fled to Mount Zion, a very strong fort, but that was beaten down, and most of the wretches who had fought so desperately were condemned to perpetual imprisonment. The walls of the city were thrown down, the houses were razed to the ground, and the earth ploughed up. About a million of people perished by the sword and famine, during this miserable siege, which lasted six months, and with Jerusalem ended the Jewish nation, for that people have ever since been scattered through the world, without any fixed habitation.

This memorable event had been foretold by our Saviour, but his words were disregarded : those who bought him of Judas for thirty pieces of silver were sold by the Romans for thirty a penny. The soldiers were so much in love with Titus, that they would have made him emperor, and crowned him where the temple stood, but he had too sacred a regard to filial duty, to accept of such an honour while his father was alive. His fame spread throughout all the empire, and a triumphal arch was erected to his memory by the citizens of Rome, at their own expence. His triumphal entry into Rome was the most splendid that had been ever beheld by the people, and among other trophies of his victory over the Jews, was the books of the old Testament, which had been brought out of the temple, and were deposited in the Roman library.

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To add to the felicity of the people, the temple of Janus was shut up after it had been open several years, so that tranquility took place under Vespasian. The first work undertaken by the emperor, was to correct and reform such abuses as had crept into the state during the late times of riot and licentiousness, and if possible, to restore good order among the people.

To effectuate so valuable a purpose, he joined his son Titus in the government with him, well knowing that the people would readily obey him from motives of love rather than fear. The army in a particular manner attracted his attention, for the soldiers had become so licentious, that it was a very difficult matter to make them submit to proper discipline. Such of the senators and knights as were obnoxious to the people, he degraded from their dignity, and placed in their room, men of the strictest integrity. The courts of law, which had during the late troubles, been prostituted to the basest purposes, and filled with a band of thieves to prey upon the people, he put under proper regulations, and ordered that every person should have justice done him as soon as his complaint should be heard. Such of the public buildings as had been hurt or demolished, he ordered to be rebuilt, particularly the capitol, which he adorned in the most splendid manner, and made it more magnificent than before.

Among other new structures which Vespasian erected, in order to adorn the city of Rome, was a spacious and elegant amphitheatre, of which some part still remains as a monument of his good taste and unbounded liberality. Nor was he less mindful of the other cities in the empire; for many of them were rebuilt, and such as had been damaged

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during the wars, were repaired and adorned with every thing that was either grand or useful. In general, the people were extremely happy under this emperor; for justice was administered in the most impartial manner, and we meet with very few instances in this reign of such acts of cruelty as had disgraced his predecessors. One, however, must not be past over in silence; for history addresses itself to a distant period, when the actions of the greatest men will be weighed in the balance of natural equity, where they will often be found wanting of many praises bestowed upon them by those who look more to the shadow than to the substance.

Upon the death of Vitellius, when the empire was in the utmost state of confusion, Julius Sabienus, who commanded in Gaul, got himself proclaimed emperor by the soldiers; but a party belonging to Vespasian being sent to oppose him, his men were totally defeated, and he obliged to seek shelter in a cave, where he remained nine years, supported by his faithful wife Epponina, who procured him provisions in the day, and brought them to him by night.

In this manner did the unfortunate Sabienus live, without any one supposing him to be alive, till at last his faithful wife was discovered, and he was taken prisoner to Rome. His wife begged for him in the most earnest manner, mingling tears with her entreaties, and many of the greatest persons in Rome interceded for him, but all in vain, for the emperor Vespasian considered him as too dangerous a rival in the empire, and therefore he was put to death in the most ignominious manner. But, however, unjustifiable such an act of cruelty may appear to persons of enlarged minds, and endowed with generosity

generosity and benevolence, yet the many other good actions performed by this emperor, or under his immediate inspection, may induce us to draw a veil over it, especially as it may in some measure be extenuated on the principles of state necessity.

He married the daughter of Vitellius to one of the Roman noblemen, and although her father had been his avowed rival, yet he furnished her with a marriage portion at his own expence. He was so conscious of his integrity as a sovereign in the administration of public affairs, that when any of his favourites gave him notice of conspiracies being formed against him, he paid no regard to them, but only told them that he had not given any offence to the people, and therefore he was not afraid of his most secret enemies. Metius Pomposianus, one of those most suspected of being his enemy, he raised to the dignity of consul, and so by a well timed act of generosity, obliged him to become his friend.

Nor was he less careful in promoting all sorts of useful laws than in reforming the abuses of the state. Josephus, the famous Jewish historian, was one of his immediate favourites, and Pliny, the great naturalist, was supported by his bounty. He gave great encouragement towards promoting the study of rhetorick, and the same munificence that shone so conspicuous in Rome, diffused itself throughout the most remote parts of the empire. Such was the fair side of his character, but these virtues were not without several blemishes.

Vespasian had a natural turn for avarice, and his unbounded liberality to learned men gave him an excuse for imposing many taxes in their own nature both illegal and oppressive. Nay, it is even asserted that he dealt in the purchasing and selling of different

commodities, and to such an height did his avarice lead him, that he even laid a tax upon urine. In what manner this abominable tax was collected, is now to us problematical, but we are assured that his son, the amiable Titus, remonstrated to him upon it, though without any success.

But although he was oppressive on the private property of the people, yet he never lost sight of providing for their safety against the common enemy, I mean those barbarous, though brave nations, with which the empire was surrounded. He employed the most able generals, for as he had been brought up in the army, so he was no stranger to real merit, and knew in what manner to reward those who did any distinguishing action in support of the Roman grandeur.

The people in the provinces were so well satisfied with the equity of his government, that we find but few accounts of insurrections taking place, and those for the most part were but of a trifling nature. Antiochus, king of a small province called Comagena, had for some time kept up a private correspondence with the Parthians, but he was defeated and taken prisoner in Cilicia, and sent to Rome, where he imagined the emperor would order him to be put to death. His fears, however, were soon dispelled, for being brought before Vespasian, the emperor gave him leave to reside in Lacedemon, and ordered, that a certain sum should be annually paid for his subsistence.

A. D. Much about the same time, Vespasian

73 was obliged to send his beloved son Titus to oppose the Alani, a nation of wild barbarians, who made an irruption into Media, and from thence to Armenia, murdering all who came in their way, and spreading desolation wherever they came.

came. But no sooner had they heard of the approach of the Roman army, than they retreated, and Titus returned loaded with spoils and honours.

In this reign, by the moderation of the emperor, great-part of Britain was subdued, and reduced into a Roman province, so as to pay annual taxes to the emperor in a regular manner. Indeed, whatever might have been the ruling motives in the breast of this emperor, certain it is, he never discovered the least sign of ambition in any part of his conduct, nor would he suffer the people to load him with the flattering titles which they had bestowed upon his predecessors.

As he had been descended of mean parents, some of his favourites desired him to conceal his birth, and give out that his origin had been more noble than was represented, but he always checked them, by taking notice that merit alone can intitle men to respect, and that the field of glory was open to those even of the meanest extraction. At last, after a glorious reign of ten years, during which his subjects enjoyed more happiness than they had for many years before, he was taken ill one day while he was visiting the Campania, and his illness encreasing, he was carried to the city in order to have proper advice. But the disease mocked the power of medicine, and he expired in the arms of his attendants, without shewing the least signs of discomposure. He was the tenth Roman emperor, and the second who died a natural death, and if we consider the distracted state of the empire when he took the government upon himself, it will appear surprizing how he could reign with such glory, and yet exercise so much moderation even to those who were his professed enemies. He was so well acquainted with his own natural temper, that he was neither dejected by

adversity, nor too much elevated by prosperity. He considered every thing as of a fluctuating nature, and he sat upon the throne as conscious that he must one day resign it. If he was cruel in the imposition of taxes, even that rigour stands justified when we consider the turbulent disposition of the people.

A. D. 79 Vespasian was succeeded in the empire by his son Titus, who had long been the

favourite of the people, and no opposition was made to him, except by his brother Domitian, who alledged that his father had left him sole heir. The senate, however, and the people were unanimous in electing Titus, and he began his reign in such a manner, that they had no reason to repent of their choice. Some of those who hated him during the life of his father, had accused him of many licentious actions, but no sooner did he ascend the throne, than he gave a convincing proof, that whatever his former vices might have been, yet he had left them all behind him, and that the prosperity and happiness of the people was the sole object he had in view.

His passions, though of the most tender and amiable nature, were strong, but he brought them under the command of reason; for although he was violently in love with Berenice, sister of Agrippa, who had been king of the Jews, yet as he knew that a marriage of that nature would give the utmost offence to the Roman people, and therefore he loaded her with presents, and sent her away.

He had attached himself too much to the company of some young noblemen, who rioted in all sorts of debauchery, but now he discarded them, telling them, that none but the virtuous were to be his companions, and as soon as they refrained from their vile practices, he was ready to treat them with

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the same share of his confidence as before, from which part of his conduct he was called the delight of mankind.

As tyrants are always hated by their subjects, so their minds are continually filled with suspicion, and for that reason alone they find themselves under a necessity of employing the meanest wretches to give notice of all those whom they consider as disaffected to their person and government; but Titus who loved popularity, and wished only to reign in the hearts of his people as an object of veneration, ordered, that no rewards should be given to such miscreants, and if any of them delivered informations, they were either obliged to make good the charges, or submit to be punished in the most exemplary manner.

The crimes of these wretches had arisen to an enormous height, no person was safe from their machinations, for the most innocent had been dragged from their houses and families, and put to death without so much as the form of a tryal. Titus was sensible that such practices were inconsistent with the natural liberties of a free people, who are the fountain of power, and therefore he ordered that they should be banished to the most remote provinces of the empire, or to be sold as slaves to the most barbarous nations who had scarce ever submitted to the Roman yoke. Public shews were exhibited in the most magnificent manner for the entertainment of the public, in order to keep alive the martial spirit for which their ancestors had been so long celebrated, and in a word, Titus became the favourite of the Romans.

He took so much pleasure in doing good, that one evening while at supper with his friends, he happened to recollect that he had done nothing

that day to serve any of his subjects, and starting up in seeming confusion, he called out, "Alas! my friends, I have lost a day." His mind seemed to be so much fixed upon promoting the interests of the people, that he even took pleasure in having any part of his conduct canvassed, that he might have an opportunity of inquiring into the nature of the accusation, and if justly founded, to avoid acting so for the future.

It was with the utmost reluctance he put any man to death, and when he found himself under an obligation to sign the warrant for the execution of a criminal, it was evident to those who attended him, that he did it contrary to his inclinations.

It was in the reign of this emperor, that the famous Julius Agricola penetrated into the most interior parts of Britain, and subdued many nations of those warlike barbarians, hitherto unknown to the Romans. This celebrated commander, who had done more towards subduing the Britons than all those who had been in the island before him, penetrated into that part since called Scotland, but as he found that it would be difficult for him to reduce it into a Roman province, he threw up a wall of turf between the Forth and the Clyde, placing centinels at proper intervals, to prevent the northern barbarians from making incursions into the Roman province, as they had hitherto done.

The most memorable incident recorded by historians, as happening in this reign, was an eruption of Mount Vesuvius, which broke out with such velocity, that many towns and villages were totally destroyed. Pliny, the author of the Natural History, lost his life on this memorable occasion, for a curiosity peculiar to himself, having led him too near the mouth of the Volcano, he was swallowed

up

up and devoured in the flames. A fire broke out in Rome at the same time, which destroyed many of the public structures, but the munificence of the emperor repaired the damages, and left the city in as elegant a manner as it was in the days of his father Vespasian.

But such a reign of uninterrupted happiness to the people did not last long, for the emperor was seized with a violent fever, which put an end to his life in the forty-first year of his age and third of his reign. Some of the Roman historians have insinuated that Titus was poisoned by the direction of his brother Domitian, but whatever truth might have been in that, there is no evidence at present remaining to support it.

The character of Titus will be best known from the foregoing narrative, and surely, if ever a prince deserved the appellation of the delight of mankind, it must have been him. His throne, with all its dignities, did not shut up the bowels of compassion in his heart, which are the most solid glories of princes; for no person ever delivered a petition without having such an answer as the emperor could give consistent with his interest and honour.

A. D. Titus having thus paid the debt of nature to the inexpressible grief of all those who wished well to the interests of the people, his brother Domitian was made choice of to succeed him. The former part of his life had been tainted with many crimes of the most odious nature, but they were all obscured in the virtues of his brother, and he was raised to the purple rather in hopes of what he would do, than from a conviction that he had done any thing to merit so high an honour.

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Indeed, he was no stranger to the natural rights of the people, nor unacquainted with the connexions that must at all times subsist between the governor and the governed. Accordingly, he began his reign in such a manner as gave pleasure to the people in general; for clemency, benevolence and liberality, seemed to be the distinguishing marks of his character. Such persons as had been injured, were readily admitted to his presence, where they were sure of having their complaints redressed, and he would often sit whole days to reverse the decrees of the judges. Literature in particular seemed to engage his attention, for he ordered that all the public libraries should be repaired, and in room of such copies as had been lost, such as were most valuable, were collected together in order to supply their place. Learned men were sent to Alexandria to collect what books were still remaining there, and in general the Roman people began to look upon themselves as under the government of a second Titus.

We have already seen in what manner the emperors Caligula and Nero began their reigns, namely, as the favourites of the people, but short indeed was the continuance. No sooner had the people formed hopes of the most uninterrupted happiness, than those emperors became slaves to their own unnatural passions, and instead of considering themselves as the first officers in the republic, they began to imagine that the whole empire had been formed for the support of their crimes.

It was the same with Domitian, for although the beginning of his reign had been distinguished by several acts of clemency, yet no sooner did he see his popularity established, than he began to trample

on the laws, and set aside the most sacred obligations.

His mind was mean, low, vulgar, and groveling; he had no pleasure in any thing of a manly nature consistent with his dignity as a hero and much less so as an emperor, for his time was spent in the company of buffoons, who said every thing possible to flatter his vanity. Philosophers of every sort were banished from Rome as persons of no service to the public, and none could procure the least share of his favour, unless they invented some new games, or distinguished themselves by such acts of dexterity as are scarce worth the name of trifles. Shows of all sorts were daily exhibited, and the whole design of this emperor, seems to have been to make the people as effeminate as himself.

His leisure hours in his closet were spent in catching flies, and so much was he attached to that trifling and ridiculous employment, that one day when a courtier asked if any person was along with the emperor, he was answered, not so much as a fly. Such are the characters of some of those dignified tyrants, who by a concurrence of fortuitous events, place themselves at the head of a republic, and then instead of attending to the affairs of government, spend their time in amusements beneath the dignity of school-boys.

But happy had it been for the Roman people had fly-catching been his greatest vice; that could not have much affected the state, nor been attended with any great prejudice to individuals. Domitian resolved that none should go before him in the career of crimes, and therefore to give a specimen of his arbitrary disposition, he recalled the famous Agricula from Britain, just at the time when he was upon

the point of making an entire conquest of that island.

Agricola was the first who had ever penetrated into Scotland, at least into that part of it that lays north of the Clyde and Forth, and by the most unweared industry he had discovered that Britain was an island entirely encompassed by the sea. This procured him no small degree of reputation, but at the same time the emperor became envious of him, so that he was obliged to resign his command, and soon after his return to Rome, he died at his country seat, not without violent suspicion that the emperor was concerned in it.

Soon after the death of Agricola, the Sarmatians, a barbarous people, made an incursion into the Roman empire, and being joined by several of those who were disaffected to the government, a whole legion was cut off. The emperor had been some time in Germany, in order to appease some of those warlike barbarians who inhabited that part of the world, and although he was conscious that his success did not entitle him to the approbation of the public, yet upon his return to Rome, he insisted upon a triumph, which was granted him, although at the same time most of the citizens, as well as senators, considered it only as a piece of solemn mockery. The Sarmatians, it is true, were in some measure defeated, but still they were not subdued, and although for some time obliged to retire behind their inaccessible mountains, yet it was only to gain time that they might be more able to encounter the Romans than ever.

In the mean time Domitian went on in the whole of his conduct so inconsistent with his duty and interest, that he seemed to long for his own destruction. Not satisfied with the common appellations that

that were daily bestowed upon him, he even assumed divine honours, and insisted that he should be ranked among the gods. He issued orders that statues of him should be erected in the most public cities of the empire, and that those should be punished with death who did not offer sacrifice to them.

Nor was his cruelty less than his madness and extravagance. Many of the Roman senators were put to death, upon the most frivolous pretences, nor could either virtue or integrity screen the most innocent from his resentment. The governors and generals in the provinces who had acquired the good will of the people, by acts of prudence and moderation, were marked out for destruction, because Domitian could not bear the thoughts of another person surpassing him in merit. Some of the most eminent writers who had copied books on the principles of natural law, were put to death in the most cruel manner, among whom was Junius Rusticus, a man of a most excellent character, whose only fault was, he told the truth. Spies were employed in every part of the city, and although the conversation of those who happened to be in company was only of a common or trifling nature, yet those miscreants would go to the emperor and represent it as a crime, and in consequence thereof many innocent persons lost their lives. Salustius, and Lucullus his lieutenants in Britain, were put to death, by an order from the emperor himself, for no other reason but that they had acquired immortal honour by opposing the northern barbarians, and preventing the Roman province in this island from becoming subject to those lawless invaders, who every year came in multitudes into South Britain, and spread all the horrors of war before them.

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LETTER XLVII.

SOME of the governors of the provinces embraced an opportunity that promised success to their ambitious views, for as Domitian had set no bounds to his extravagant actions, and every species of cruelty that could either be invented or inflicted, they doubted not but they might by a fortuitous concurrence of events drive from the seat of regal authority, a wretch who was a disgrace to human nature.

The most forward of these was Lucius Antonius, lieutenant of upper Germany, a man of undaunted courage, and the most unbounded ambition. He had brought great part of the army over to his party, but just as he had approached the Rhine, that river overflowed its banks, so that his men were divided, and Normandus, who commanded for Domitian coming upon him at the same time, he was totally defeated.

The news of this success was brought to the emperor at a time when he was beginning to despair, and instead of making a proper use of it by lenient measures, he launched out into greater acts of cruelty than ever. He even seemed to take pleasure in them, and part of his time was spent in inventing new and unheard of tortures. He joined hypocrisy to cruelty, and some of his most intimate friends and favourites were crucified on a pretended suspicion that they had conspired against him, and were enemies to his person, and government, nay, that they only wanted an opportunity to dispatch him.

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That the people might be convinced that no character, be it ever so sacred or respectable could protect the most dignified person in Rome from the cruelty of the emperor, he one evening invited the whole body of the senate to supper. They came at the time appointed, and were received in the most complaisant manner, but when they came into the hall they found it hung with black, and coffins placed in the intermediate spaces, with the names of several of their members written upon them. A few glimmering lamps were lighted up, which served only to heighten the solemnity of the scene, and at last some of the lictors came in attended by the guards dressed in the most mournful habits.

The senators now began to look upon themselves as devoted to destruction ; they were no strangers to the suspicious and vindictive character of the emperor, and therefore they began in earnest to look for death. But although Domitian was a cruel inhuman tyrant, yet it does not seem that he had any thing farther in view than to establish his own authority by an act of brutal pleasure, in triumphing over the fears of men who were the guardians of the laws, and the fathers of the people. When he found that they looked upon each other as dead men, he ordered the gates of the palace to be set open, and, contrary to what they feared, every one was allowed to walk out, while Domitian smiled in secret that he had mortified their pride, and convinced them of what he had at any time in his power to do.

Nothing was more common than to see this abandoned emperor retire from a public execution to one of the public brothels, which had been licensed by his order, and there spend the remainder of the day in the arms of a harlot. His avarice

avarice was such, that in order to gratify an unnatural passion, he employed the vilest wretches to give evidence against all those whom he looked upon as disaffected to his person and government, and though no proof of their guilt appeared, yet they were sentenced to be put to death, and their estates sold to those who bid most money for them.

Among those who fell under the severity of his displeasure, or rather, who were marked out for destruction by him, were the Jews, whose regal government, city and temple had been severally abolished by his brother Titus. These people finding themselves despised all over the Roman provinces as vagabonds, who had no settled habitation, nor the privilege of purchasing one acre of land, took to the practice of lending money on usury, and there is reason to believe that they often exacted the most exorbitant interest. As they were obnoxious to the Romans in general, so nothing was more common than to hear complaints exhibited against them to the senate at Rome, or the governors of the provinces. In all these causes both parties were heard, and as it often happened that the complaints against the Jews were the effect of malice rather than justice, so they still continued to enjoy the protection of the emperors.

But notwithstanding the equity of the magistrates in deciding between the Jews and the other subjects of the empire consistent with law, yet the numerous complaints exhibited against these unhappy people, reached the ears of the emperor, and they were laid under the severest contributions. To give some colour to his unbounded cruelty, he made use of an insinuation that there was

was an antient prophecy that one of the family of David was to reign over all the world, and although this related to the spiritual kingdom of Christ, yet the emperor issued an order commanding all those who were of the family of David to be put to death, and their effects brought into his own private treasury. It was common with the Romans to blend the Jews and Christians together, as one people, because they were utterly ignorant of the tenets of either, and therefore under pretence of punishing the Jews, the Christians suffered a more severe persecution than that which had taken place in the reign of Nero.

He issued an edict by which the Christians were banished to the most remote provinces of the empire, among whom was John the Evangelist, who was sent to the island of Patmos, where he wrote that divine book now called The Revelations. Some of the astrologers, of which there were many in Rome, had published a prediction concerning the death of the emperor, and one of those namely Asclepeterion, being called upon to answer for the truth of his prediction, Domitian asked him " If he knew what death he was to die ? " " Yes ; " (answered the astrologer) I am to be devoured " by dogs." Upon that he was ordered first to be slain, and then burned to ashes, but a storm coming the flames were dispersed, and the dogs eat the remains of his flesh.

Domitian was now become odious to all sober men who wished well to the interest of the commonwealth. They had long been plagued with tyrants, not so much in consequence of superior power, but merely because the love of virtue was in a manner extinct among them. They were not ignorant that the same methods by which tyrants had

had been extirpated, might be again put in practice, and therefore it was resolved upon, that Domitian should share the same fate as some of those who had gone before him.

This wretched emperor was a monster of dissimulation, and although he affected to care for his wife, Domitia, yet he was convinced in his own mind that she was an enemy to his measures, and had engaged to promote his destruction, in concert with several other conspirators. Domitia was a woman of a loose character, inconsistent with that modesty which is the ornament in general of the female sex, for she had forsaken her former husband to live with the emperor, and the same fluctuating passion having still continued to actuate every part of her conduct, she fell in love with one Paris, a comedian, and at that time in great repute on the Roman stage. Their interviews were not carried on in so secret a manner, but the emperor got notice of them, and he was determined to take a cruel revenge. He used to keep a book in which he inserted the names of all those whom he devoted to destruction, and one day Domitia happening to look at it, saw her name among the others who were devoted to suffer as victims to Domitian's malice and cruelty.

Revenge, so consistent with female characters, notwithstanding their attachment to lasciviousness, now took place in the mind of this woman, and therefore in order to provide for her own safety, she shewed the fatal list to Petronius and Norbanus, praefects of the prætorian bands, who, along with her were devoted to destruction. Parthenius the chamberlain of the household, was another of those whom the emperor had devoted to destruction, and as self-preservation is the strongest principle that

can operate in the human breast, the destruction of the emperor was resolved upon by those, whom he had singled out as the objects of his malice. In the mean time Domitian, whose death had been long foretold by the astrologers, began to look upon himself in danger, and in order to elude the machinations of his enemies, he shut himself up in his palace. He was so much terrified that like all cowards he often jumped out of bed in the night, imagining that he was surrounded by conspirators.

This hastened on his destruction, for one night jumping out of bed, he asked if it was the proper time to go to the bath, and being answered that it was, he immediately dressed himself. He ordered all his servants to retire, and Stephanus approaching him, gave him a paper, containing an account of a pretended conspiracy, but while he was reading it, he was stabbed in the groin. The stab was given by Stephanus, who had concealed a dagger under a scarf, in which his arm was tied up, but as the wound was not mortal, Domitian pulled him down, and called out for assistance, not doubting but some of his servants would come to rescue him.

The emperor exerted himself to the utmost, in order to save his life, but just as he had almost over-powered Stephanus, Parthianus, one of his freed-man, came into the room, attended by several of the guards, and Domitian was instantly dispatched, after receiving a great number of wounds. Just as the emperor was dispatched, some of the guards who had not been concerned in the conspiracy, rushed in and seeing their master dead, they slew Stephanus on the spot. Such was the end of Domitian, one of the most brutal tyrants that ever disgraced regal dignity. His father had raised himself to the imperial throne by his valour, and he reigned in the hearts of his

his people by his equity and moderation. He adorned the city of Rome in the most elegant manner, and if some of his actions bordered upon severity, yet they all conduced towards promoting the happiness of the people. His brother Titus was the delight of mankind. He lived and acted for the good of his subjects, and when he died all ranks of people lamented that his reign had been so short. On the other hand Domitian had many advantages when he ascended the throne, to which his father and brother were strangers, but he trampled upon those privileges, and at last fell a victim to the revenge of his injured subjects.

We are told by several of the Roman historians, and there is good reason for believing it, that Domitian was so little attentive towards promoting the love of his people, that when he was told they hated him, he coolly answered, "Let them hate me, then I know they fear me." He looked upon all the subjects of the empire as made only for him to trample on, and he often wished that they had but one neck, that he might strike it off at one blow. He imagined, like many other tyrants, whose actions have disgraced the annals of history, that he might live for ever, or at least during the term of his natural life, in committing every cruel action; but fatal experience at last convinced him, that although the people may for some time submit to be trampled on, yet the love of liberty, inseparably connected with human nature, will exert itself and wreak its vengeance on the head of its oppressor.

Domitian ought to remain on record as an example to those weak, and consequently wicked princes who are foolish enough to imagine that they have an interest separate from that of their subjects, the most fatal error that ever took place in a system

of politics. The interest of the people, and the glory of the prince, must go hand in hand together, and when any thing of a separate nature takes place, convulsions must ensue in the commonwealth, and all things return to a state of universal confusion and anarchy.

A. D. 96. The murder of Domitian was an event that gave great pleasure to the Roman citizens in general, particularly to the senate, who ordered all his statues to be pulled down, and loaded his memory with every mark of reproach. He was even denied a public funeral, but the soldiers, whom he had on many occasions attached to himself by his bounty, considered his death as an event that would abridge their power, and deprive them of many perquisites which they had formerly enjoyed.

The senate sensible that the soldiers would not fail to embrace the opportunity of chusing a new emperor suitable to their own inclinations, resolved to be before-hand with them, and therefore Cocceius Nerva was elected almost as soon as Domitian's death was known. This man, who according to some of the Roman historians was a native of Spain, and an eminent pattern of every virtue that could enoble the most exalted character, was above sixty years of age, but still admired by all who knew him. He was endowed with so much humility, that when the senate sent a deputation of their own body to wait upon him with an account of the election, he thanked them for putting him in mind of his duty, and told them that the laws should be the rule of his conduct, and his principal study that of promoting the interests of the people.

But notwithstanding the virtues of Nerva that made his character shine so conspicuous in a private station,

station, yet he had not that fortitude which is absolutely necessary to constitute the character of a great prince. This weakness induced him to repose the utmost confidence in favourites, many of whom were obnoxious to the people, but as the Romans had been so long accustomed to the yoke of tyranny, they were too much pleased with their situation to complain.

Humanity, or an universal benevolence, were so interwoven in his mind, that, not content with that confidence placed in him by the people, he swore in the most solemn manner that no senator should be put to death by his order, let their crimes be of ever so atrocious a nature. To this resolution he adhered in so religious a manner, that when two of the senators entered into a conspiracy to murder him, he sent for them, and giving each of them a dagger, desired them to strike, for if he was guilty of any crime, he was willing to die.

Such acts of benevolence might have been considered in the most favourable light by some persons whose notions of government were too much contracted; but the most sensible men among the Romans looked upon them rather as bordering on insanity. They considered such unlimited indulgence as an encouragement to the commission of crimes, and a relaxation of the laws by which all sorts of offenders are kept in proper subjection, and punished in the most exemplary manner.

Many sarcasms were daily thrown out upon the emperor for his unbounded lenity, but still he never complained at the greatest freedom of speech, being willing that his actions and professions should mutually illustrate and confirm each other. He was so desirous of being beloved by the people, that rather than the provinces should groan under the load of such

such taxes as had been imposed in former reigns to support luxury, and reward favourites, he sold his plate and all other things belonging to him, and brought the money into the public treasury. He ordered that all informers who had given false accounts of conspiracies under Domitian, should be put to death, and took care that during his reign no encouragement should be gived to such wretches. All unnecessary expences were abolished, nor would he suffer any statue of him to be placed in public, as had been the practice in some of the former reigns.

He had so little regard for money, that when it was brought to him, he seemed to consider it as of no value, and if he appropriated any of it to his own use, it was only that he might have it in his power to reward those who discharged their duty to the public. One of his courtiers having discovered a treasure that lay concealed, brought it to the emperor, but Nerva, instead of taking it, applauded him for his honesty, and desired that he would keep it for the service of his family.

But mildness of such a distinguishing nature was only thrown away upon the Romans, who were of too turbulent a disposition to consider the virtues of their prince in a proper light. Many of the senators formed parties against him, but the greatest punishments he inflicted on them, was only to send them into some of the more distant provinces. The most active of these conspirators was Casparius Orianus, one of the favourites of the late emperor, and as he was a very vicious man, so he insisted that the murder of Domitian should be revenged. To facilitate his scheme he raised an insurrection, which Nerva did all in his power to suppress in the most lenient manner, without going to extremities.

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But the soldiers were lost to every sense of duty, and regardless of the obligations they were under to the emperor and the republic, they murdered Petronius and Parthenius in the most barbarous manner, at the same time compelling Nerva to give a sanction to their rebellion. These extravagant actions of the soldiers induced the emperor to adopt Trajan to be his successor, merely on account of his virtues, for he was no way related to his family. Trajan was then in Germany, but messengers being sent for him, he came to Rome, where his spirited conduct subdued the licentiousness of the soldiers, and brought all things into proper order. Nerva did not long survive the choice he had made of Trajan, for being seized with a fever, he died at Rome, leaving behind him the character of a good man, although not an heroic emperor.

A. D. Trajan ascended the throne of the
98 Roman empire amidst the acclamations of
the people, a circumstance common even with the worst of sovereigns, because the people generally bestow their praises before they make a proper enquiry, whether the object is deserving of them or not. He had long been the favourite of the people, as well as the soldiers, and his abilities were fit for any station whatever. His ancestors were Romans, but he was born at Seville in Spain, where his father commanded, and while very young, he attended him in several expeditions. During the time he served under his father, he acquired great reputation, for he inured himself to all the hardships of the camp, and lived in the same manner as the common soldiers. When he was appointed to the command in Germany, he acted with such moderation, that the soldiers considered him as a father rather than a general, for the consummate wisdom of the commander

mander shone conspicuous in all his actions. His appearance was majestic, and his constitution unimpaired; chiefly owing to temperance, for neither example nor allurements could lead him off from a sense of his duty, nor make him embrace those pleasures which in the end generally prove the ruin of heroes.

His modesty was equal to all his other virtues, and although some of the Roman emperors have been celebrated for more clemency, and others for a more splendid appearance in the camp, yet Trajan contrived to join these virtues together in such a manner, that he engaged the affections of all his subjects.

The first person that addressed him upon his ascending the throne, was Plutarch, the celebrated philosopher, and his master, who in a most sensible speech, exhorted him to divest himself of all puerile connections, and make the interest of the people his sole study. He recapitulated to him the errors of former emperors, and put him in mind of the necessity he was under to profit by their example. To divest himself of all mean, selfish views, and attend to such things as was becoming his dignity, and consistent with the interests of the people. He added, that Trajan had it in his power to make himself the greatest of men; to entail immortal fame upon his memory, and to transmit his name to all succeeding ages, as a copy to be imitated by the great and the good. Above all things, he advised him to watch strictly, and with the utmost circumspection, over those passions which are too apt to mislead the judgment, and draw the mind from a sense of duty, when it ought to be principally fixed upon it.

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This advice was not lost upon Trajan, for as he resolved to make the laws the rule of his conduct, he told the prefect of the praetorian bands, when he gave him his sword, to stab him dead with it if ever he did any thing inconsistent with his duty, but if not, to turn the point of it against the enemies of Rome, adding, at the same time, that the sovereign who gives orders to his people for the regulation of their conduct, ought not to transgress them himself. Soon after his being declared emperor, he found himself under a necessity of engaging in a war with the Dacians, who during the reign of Domitian, had made several irruptions into the empire. A general engagement ensued, in which the Romans were victorious, and the enemy were obliged to submit to such terms as Trajan thought proper to prescribe, namely, that they should pay an annual tribute to Rome, and acknowledge themselves subjects of the emperor.

The war being thus apparently ended, Trajan marched back to Rome, where he was received amidst the acclamations of the people, but soon after he found himself under the necessity of again taking the field. Decebalus, king of the Dacians, without paying any regard to the most solemn treaties, took the field with a large army, spreading desolation wherever he came, without any regard to age or sex.

During the beginning of the war, the Romans were reduced to great hardships, and some of their advanced parties being defeated, several of their generals were made prisoners, among whom was Longinus, who rather than be put to death by the enemy, laid violent hands on himself.

But nothing could damp the spirit of Trajan, who seemed to rise superior to every opposition.

He

He ordered a bridge to be built across the Danube, a work of the most stupendous nature, but perseverance enabled him to finish it, and soon after he annexed the wild uncultivated kingdom of Dacia to the Roman empire. Decebalus finding his army routed, and his kingdom seized on by the Romans, and at the same time being conscious that he had no reason to expect mercy, after he had broke the most solemn treaties, put an end to his own life, and his head was carried to Rome in triumph.

Trajan having thus put an end to the war, returned to Italy, and the citizens of Rome received him with every distinguishing mark of respect, while the senate decreed him a triumph. Ambassadors were sent to him from the tributary provinces, and such as had not yet submitted to the Roman yoke, seemed eager to put themselves under his protection, or rather to unite their kingdoms to his dominions.

LETTER XLVIII.

TRAJAN was so well acquainted with his duty as a sovereign, that he had no sooner restored peace to the empire, than he devoted the greatest part of his time towards beautifying the city, and erecting such structures as were likely to be of the greatest utility to the people. No vicious persons were admitted to a share of his friendship, for his leisure hours were spent in the company of such men as were an ornament to Rome. He had no suspicion of any conspiracies being formed against him, for he was conscious of having discharged his duty rather as the father of his people, than like one who had a right to exact obedience from them. Such

was the character of Trajan during the former part of his reign, and that any alteration should ever have taken place, must be ascribed to some cruel, ill-minded persons, who were equally enemies to peace and virtue.

A. D. The Christians were now become extremely numerous throughout the different provinces of the Roman empire, and although their religion forbade them giving any disturbance to the government, yet those who hated them on account of the integrity of their lives, represented them as persons who sought to destroy the emperor, and set up Christ for their king. These persecuted people had been obliged to meet together in the nights, and as they were under an indispensible obligation of worshipping Christ as their Lord, the pagan priests insinuated that all these nocturnal meetings were kept for no other purpose than to hatch schemes and plots of sedition.

Trajan, notwithstanding the natural clemency of his disposition, was strongly attached to the idolatrous worship of pagan deities, and therefore he published several edicts, commanding all the Christians to sacrifice to the gods under pain of death. The emperor's orders were executed with the most unrelenting severity, many of the most eminent Christian bishops were put to death, and thousands of their innocent followers were murdered in cool blood by the populace. This persecution raged with great violence for some time, till Pliny, pro-consul of Bithynia, wrote an epistle to the emperor, wherein he told him that he had made the most diligent enquiry concerning the Christians, and that all he could discover, was, that they met together on the first day of the week to worship Christ, whom they called God, and that they bound themselves

selves by an oath not to do any injury to their neighbours. At the same time, Tiberianus, proconsul of Palestine, sent notice to the emperor, that the Christians were a peaceable body of people, and that he could not any longer, consistent with the dictates of his conscience, punish them in the manner they had hitherto been.

This had the desired effect, for the edicts were in a manner recalled, none of the proconsuls being obliged to seek for the Christians, but if any of them were so imprudent as to come publicly and make an open profession of their religion, then they were to suffer death. About this time the Parthians and Armenians revolted, so that the emperor was obliged to march against them, in order to bring them once more under the yoke of bondage.

Accordingly, he marched against them at the head of a numerous army, which he had brought under the most strict and regular discipline. Armenia submitted to him after making a feint resistance, and then entering the kingdom of Mesopotamia, he forced the inhabitants to pay an annual tribute to Rome. Nor was he less successful against the Parthians, for he not only reduced them to obedience, but likewise subdued all Chaldea and Babylon, at which place he crossed the Euphrates in the sight of the enemy, who did every thing to oppose his passage.

He continued his march to the city of Cetisiphon, which submitted to him on his approach, and from thence entered the extensive kingdom of Persia. His ambition or desire of glory, seemed equal to that of Alexander's, for advancing to the Indian ocean, he subdued several nations, and added them to the Roman empire.

These conquests, however, were more splendid than advantageous, for although they conveyed the idea of territories to Rome, yet nothing beneficial arose from them. They were too far from the capital to be kept in a proper state of subjection, and therefore no sooner had the conqueror turned his back, than the people asserted their former rights and privileges.

During the time that Trajan was employed in these romantic expeditions, the Jews revolted and murdered all the subjects of the empire, who had the misfortune to fall into their hands. Deluded as they had hitherto been, they still looked for the coming of the Messiah, who was to rescue them from bondage, and in that they were encouraged by many impostors, who from time to time rose up among them.

The Jews, ever since the destruction of their city, had been oppressed by the Roman emperors in the most cruel manner, under pretence that they were enemies to the state, and therefore being driven mad by the rigour of their masters, they broke out into such extravagant acts as had scarcely ever been heard of. Neither age nor sex escaped their malice, and it is even said, that they eat the dead bodies of those whom they murdered. Some of them they caused to be devoured by wild beasts, and in general the most excruciating tortures were invented, as if they had been destitute of natural passions. But their fury was soon spent, and their enemies retaliated upon them the same cruelties as they had practised, putting them to death without any regard to their being either innocent or guilty.

Trajan had now obtained such a large share of military glory, that he resolved to return to Rome, being obliged to march through Mesopotamia, he attacked

attacked Edessa, and reduced it entirely to ashes. That he might prevent the people in the East from forming another insurrection, he caused Parthesaspates to be crowned king of Persia, and appointed another person to govern the provinces adjoining to the Caspian sea. This gave so much joy to the Roman people, that they began to consider themselves as under no further necessity of going to the east to prosecute new conquests ; and Trajan who had almost exhausted his constitution in the wars, resolved to return to Rome, and make a proper enquiry into the administration of affairs during the time he had been absent from Italy.

Adrian, one of his greatest favourites, was left to govern in the east, while Trajan continued his journey to Rome, where he doubted not that the people would receive him with all those marks of honour that are so bewitching to the human mind. But he did not live to see the seat of the empire, for he was attacked with an apoplexy at Selucia, where he died lamented by the people in general. His wife Plotina attended him in his last illness, as she had always done in the camp, and some have thought that she forged the will by which Adrian was appointed his successor.

A. D. Such was the end of Trajan, in the fifty third year of his age, and twentieth of his reign. He was certainly a man of great abilities, and in many things the beloved darling of the people. The Romans were so sensible of his mild administration, that it was common for them when a new emperor ascended the throne, to wish that he might be a Trajan. As a military officer who commanded in the most dangerous wars, his character stands unimpeached, but still his conquests added no new advantages to the Ro-

mans, for they were lost almost as soon as acquired. The name of a conqueror does sometimes more than his arms, and when Trajan died, the power and military courage, with which he had been distinguished, seemed to vanish with the loss of those persons that had been the object of it.

At his death the Roman empire was rather too large, and from that time it began to dwindle away, notwithstanding the many efforts of his successors to preserve it from ruin. Trajan was formed by nature both for the field and the cabinet. When the interest of the public required his attendance in the most distant provinces, he never considered the hardships he had to undergo as too great, and no sooner were the toils of war over, than he returned to the city and cultivated the arts of peace, which ought to be the principal object that every monarch has in view. In a word, he was an heroic warrior, a wise legislator, and might have been considered as a mild emperor, had not his cruelties against the innocent Christians drawn a veil over all the other parts of his conduct. His example exhibits a striking lesson to princes in general, but more particularly to those who being endowed with good natural parts, shut their eyes to the complaints and state of their people, and suffer some of their most innocent subjects to be persecuted in consequence of false representations being made of their conduct.

Had Trajan made the same enquiry into the character of the Christians, that Pliny his servant did, he would never have suffered them to be put to death, in an illegal manner, but like many other sovereigns, the innocent were destroyed before it was enquired

quired into whether they had so much as given the least offence.

No sooner was the death of Trajan made public, than Adrian resolved to avail himself of that circumstance, and therefore marched with the utmost expedition to Rome; and had the good fortune to be declared emperor, by all the different orders of the people, before he had proceeded any farther than the city of Antioch. From Antioch, he wrote to the senate at Rome, informing them that although his election to the purple might be considered as rather too hasty, yet he had not solicited for that high honour, and therefore he was determined to rule the Roman empire consistent with the laws that had been made in favour of him. Accordingly he began to look upon some of the conquests made by Trajan as of too extensive a nature ever to be of any consequence to the republic, and that it was not of any service to Rome to have more provinces subject to her than she was able to govern.

This was undoubtedly a most wise and excellent resolution, and, having settled the affairs of the East, he left Sevrus to command in Syria, with plenary powers to act in such a manner that he should not be accountable to any but the emperor or the senate. The ashes of Trajan were carried in triumph before Adrian when he made his public entry into Rome, and it is almost impossible to express the satisfaction that took place among all ranks of people, when they recollect ed in how mild and equitable a manner he had ruled the empire, while he sat on the throne.

A column was erected to the memory of Trajan one hundred and forty feet high, upon which were engraven all the trophies by which he had distin-

guished himself, and on the top of the pillar which is still remaining, his ashes were placed in a golden urn. The honours paid to the memory of the emperor Trajan, were no more than what his merit had entitled him to, and it remains a convincing proof, that although the Romans had in a great measure degenerated from the virtues of their ancestors, yet they were not totally divested of gratitude. From this benevolence let princes learn, that whatever may be their condition in life, and however numerous, the praises bestowed upon them by their favourites may be, yet when death has consigned them to oblivion, their actions will be animadverted upon with the utmost freedom, and every thing will be reckoned among the number of vices that is not consistent with the most rigid virtue. The glare of court luxury may acquire a temporary applause, the destruction of a nation may make a man be esteemed a hero, and the severe execution of the rigid letter of the law may induce persons of weak minds to consider the sovereign as the father of his people; but time and the minute deliberations of the people, strips off all these false disguises, and represents the sovereign not what he was considered by his more needy dependants, but what he was with respect to that rule of duty prescribed for the regulation of his conduct.

Adrian had some difficulties to encounter when he assumed the purple, different from such as had gone before him. His immediate predecessor Trajan had been both loved and honoured, and therefore it was necessary for him in order to maintain his popularity, to set such a right example before him for the rule of his conduct.

Adrian was one of the most accomplished men both in body and mind that was to be met with in that

that age. He was well acquainted with all martial exercises, and as a commander, he had made himself a compleat master of the military art. As a lover of literature, he had cultivated the powers of his mind, and composed verses in the most elegant manner, on different subjects, in poetry. Nor was he less acquainted with the constitution of his country, for he often pleaded at the bar as an advocate, and his eloquence was admired by all who knew him. And his memory was as equally retentive as the solidity of his judgment, for he seldom ever read any thing, or heard a man's name mentioned without remembering it forever after.

In moral duties, or the discharge of those obligations, binding upon him as a man, he seemed to aim at nothing less than that of setting an example to all his subjects. The debts that were owing him, and which he might have recovered by law he freely forgave, and lest those who owed him money should ever be brought to any trouble, he ordered all the bonds and other obligations to be publicly burnt in the forum, before the whole body of the citizens.

All the injuries received by him while in a private station were freely forgiven, alledging this as a reason for his moderation, that being advanced to the seat of regal dignity, laid him under an indispensable obligation to forget things of a trifling nature. He took care that no person should take a place in the senate unless their virtues entitled them to so distinguished an honour, and his bounty extended to all such needy persons as seemed in want of his assistance. In a word, Adrian considered himself as the father, rather than the master of the Roman empire, and all his public or private ac-

tions seemed to flow from a heart actuated by principles of the purest benevolence.

But notwithstanding all those virtues, yet he was not without vices to counterbalance them, or rather to prevent their shining with the most distinguished lustre. He revived the persecutions against the Christians, and a certain selfishness that seemed predominant in his nature, induced him to give rewards to those vile miscreants, informers, who had been proscribed in the former reign. From this circumstance we may learn, that there is no character in the world free from blame. The most virtuous, the most exalted even on the score of virtue, have still something in them that seems to tarnish their best actions, and leave succeeding ages to look upon their conduct in a problematical point of view. No man is truly great who is not truly good, and if none are truly good, then let sovereigns never forget to keep a watchful eye over their hearts.

Adrian's first attempt in a public capacity, after he was chosen emperor, was to contract the bounds of the empire, and not pretend to a sovereignty over nations, which in its own nature were no better than nominal. He knew that it was in a manner impossible to keep such a standing army on foot as would be able to oppose the incursions of the barbarians; but no sooner had he formed this salutary resolution, than he was dissuaded from it by his friends. They represented to him that he would thereby lessen the glory of the Roman empire, by giving up those provinces that had been conquered at a great expence of blood and treasure, and sink into contempt among the people.

Much

Much about this time, the Dacians, Sarmatians, and Alani, made several incursions into the Roman provinces, and the bridge built by Trajan over the Danube, helped in a great measure to facilitate their conquests. Adrian, sensible that the same bridge which Trajan had built to enable him to oppose those numerous barbarians, would be of equal service to them in making daily inroads, ordered the bridge to be broken down; so that no fragments of it are now remaining. The barbarians who had been daily learning the art of war from the Romans, had taught them to fight from their example, were obliged to retire to their inaccessible mountains, and uninhabited parts. Adrian returned to Rome, where he heard the disagreeable news that a conspiracy had been sometime formed against him, by persons from whom he expected the most implicit obedience.

This conspiracy was deeply contrived; and that it might be attended with success, the principal persons concerned in it were of the consular dignity. Their design was to have murdered Adrian, either while he was enjoying the diversions of hunting, or while he was sacrificing; but a discovery being made, they were all apprehended, and put to death by a decree of the senate. This was done in compliance with the request of Adrian, who had promised that no senator should be put to death by his order, and therefore to clear himself from all suspicion of being concerned in their death, he left them to stand or fall by the laws. These intestine commotions being properly settled, and peace restored to the city, Adrian resolved to visit every province in the empire, a duty incumbent

bent upon every sovereign, although too little practised. In consequence of that resolution, he crossed the Alps and went to Gaul, where he ordered all the people to be numbered, and from thence having proceeded in the same manner through the conquered provinces of Germany and Holland, he came over to Britain. He had been informed that the natives of Scotland, then called Irene and Caledonia, were continually making incursions into the Roman province in this island, he ordered a wall of earth to be thrown up between the mouth of the river Tyne in Northumberland, and the Eden in Cumberland. This, however, was only a weak attempt, for the northern barbarians broke through every opposition, and as soon as the spring season returned, they broke down the wall, and spread desolation wherever they came.

Having settled all the affairs in Britain, and placed proper governors to direct the people in that valuable province, he returned to Gaul, and from thence continued his journey to Rome, where he was received amidst the acclamations of the people. Indeed his public conduct had been such, that all the citizens looked upon him with veneration, but as no happiness in this life can remain uninterrupted, so he received an account that the Parthians had again taken up arms.

This induced him to set out for Asia, and in his way thither, he went to visit Athens, so long celebrated for being the seat of the muses, and the mother of learning throughout the world. There he was initiated into the Elusinian mysteries, the highest system of the heathen mythology, and many other distinguishing honours were conferred upon him.

It

It was at Athens, that Granianus, proconsul of the Lesser Asia, came to meet the emperor, and he made such a representation in favour of the Christians, that the emperor issued an edict, commanding all the governors of the provinces to refrain from persecuting these innocent people. Nay, he even went so far as to propose that Christ should be ranked among the Gods, but from that he was dissuaded by his favourites, and more probably by the order of Divine Providence, which would not suffer the name of the son of God to be placed in the same catalogue with idols.

From Athens he returned to Sicily, where he visited Mount Ætna, and then went over to Naples, and from thence to Rome. Having settled the domestic peace of the city in a proper manner, he equipped a fleet, and sailed to Africa, where he ordered public buildings to be erected, and reformed all such abuses as had crept into the government of the different provinces. He ordered the ancient city of Carthage to be rebuilt, and that its former name might be consigned to oblivion, he gave it the name of Adrianople, or the city of Adrian. From Africa, he passed over to Italy, and having once more visited Rome, he set out for Asia, regulating all the abuses that he found in the government of other princes. He travelled through Syria and Palestina to Egypt, where he caused the tomb of Pompey to be repaired in a proper manner. He ordered that the city of Jerusalem should be rebuilt in the most magnificent manner, and although the Jews seemed to consider this act of the emperor as no small mark of his royal favour, yet in the end, by their own obstinacy, it became destructive to them, and was attended with the most fatal consequences.

The

The Jews, ever obstinate and bigotedly attached to their own rites and ceremonies, could not bear the thought that Pagans and Christians should be permitted to settle in Jerusalem, nor in any of the territories formerly belonging to it. Accordingly, they fell upon them without mercy, and both Romans and Christians were murdered in the most cruel manner, although they had not given them any offence.

The Jews, as was customary with them, had been deluded by one who pretended to the character of the Messiah, and that he was come to deliver them from all their troubles. The name of this vile impostor was Bariocab, who pretended that he was the star foretold by the false prophet Ballaam, and many of these deluded people followed him as if he had been that Divine Person promised to them in the writings of the Old Testament. An account of these massacres and murders were transmitted to Adrian while he was at Athens, upon his return to Rome, and therefore, in order to quell the insurrection, he sent Julius Severus at the head of a powerful army, who destroyed their principal towns, and put to death above half a million of the inhabitants. Such as had not taken up arms were banished to the most distant provinces, nor were they permitted to come within sight of their native land. This may be considered as the last destruction of the Jews; for although they had been in a manner banished by Titus, yet some of them till this period remained in Judea, but ever since that time they have been considered as vagabonds who had no fixed habitation.

The peace of the empire would have been now settled in a proper manner, had it been possible to prevent the barbarians from making incursion into

the Roman provinces, but no sooner were the Jews subdued, than some of them entered Media, and spread destruction wherever they came. ^{Publis adi}
^{ent} Adrian, who was almost worn out with the hardships of war, rather than go in person to oppose those barbarians, made peace with them upon very partial terms, by which they were induced to return once more to their inaccessible mountains, and make themselves ready for new invasions as soon as an opportunity should offer.

In the mean time the emperor resolved to return to Rome, which accordingly he did, and was received by the people with every demonstration of joy, especially when they heard that he was to spend the remainder of his days with them. He was now advanced in years, but nothing could divert his attention from the affairs of government, and his leisure hours were spent in the company of his friends, with whom he conversed freely on the most abstruse matters in philosophy. ^{ad aliud respon}

In this manner, the latter years of the emperor Adrian were spent, but still not without a mixture of vices, for he aimed to be considered as infallible, and in consequence of that ridiculous notion, ordered some of the most ingenious artists to be put to death because they found fault with the public buildings constructed by him. But for all that, he had the most just notions of regal government, and got an edict published by the senate, whereby it was ordered that none of those unhappy persons called slaves should be put to the torture when their masters were found murdered in their houses; a practice that had hitherto taken place among the Romans. ^{ad aliud respon}

LETTER XLIX.

ADRIAN, ever attentive to the welfare of the people, resolved to provide for their happiness even after his death, and not leave them exposed as they had hitherto been on every new election.

Accordingly, he adopted as his successor Marcus Antonnius, commonly called the Pious, and the vast qualifications of that extraordinary person, remains a convincing proof of that sound judgment, by which the whole conduct of the emperor had been regulated. But the infirmities of Adrian daily increased, and so violently was he racked with pain, that he often endeavoured to persuade those who attended him, to put an end to his life.

This horrid resolution was consistent with the depraved notions of the heathens in general, but for the honour of Antoninus, let it be mentioned, that he said all he could to persuade him to be reconciled to his fate. At last, the severity of his pain deprived him at times of his reason, and after dictating some verses on the immortality of the soul, he expired in the sixty-second year of his age, crowned with honour, and lamented by the people in general.

Adrian, to all the exterior graces of a handsome person, added such qualifications as are seldom found in one person. Well acquainted both with foreign and domestic laws, he reduced into one book all the acts of the senate, and edicts of the emperors.

This was of infinite service to the people in general, and from his death till the total declension of Roman power, if the people were more corrupt in

in their lives than formerly, yet they had much better laws, and judges of greater learning and integrity. He left the Roman empire in a state of perfect tranquility at home, while abroad he was respected by his enemies, for even the barbarians trembled at his name.

Adrian having thus paid the debt of nature A. D. 137 he was succeeded in the purple by Marcus Antoninus, whom he had adopted for that purpose. This great man was descended from a noble family, and born at Nismes in Gaul, where his father commanded under the *prætors*. Great care had been taken of his education, and as soon as he had acquired a perfect knowledge of the Greek language and philosophy, he set himself to study the laws and constitution of his country, with abilities that would have done honour to the highest station in the universe; so great was his modesty, that he began with discharging his duty in the most humble sphere, and at last passed with applause through those of a superior nature. He was an eager stickler for the religion of the heathens, but at the same time no man ever discharged the duties of a sovereign with greater fidelity to the interest of his people, who loaded him with accumulated honours. All his private property, as well as his paternal estate, he gave to the use of the public, and no person was advanced to any dignity under him, unless his merit entitled him to it. His wife Faustina complaining of his unbounded liberality, he told her, that no sooner was he advanced to the purple, than all private vices forsook him, for from that time, nothing was to take place in his mind, but such as related to the interests of the commonwealth.

*Im
stude*

In the whole of his conduct, he discovered such excellent judgment, and such an universal acquaintance with human nature, that he even seemed to profit by all the vices and even failings of his predecessors. Although his paternal care extended itself to the utmost provinces in the empire, yet he thought that it was more consistent with his duty to remain in the capital, than to make an ostentatious display of his regal dignity, by visiting the cities that lay at a considerable distance.

The barbarians who inhabited that part of Britain now called Scotland, made so many incursions into the Roman province, south of Adrian's wall, that some of the Britons in the interior parts joined with them, and therefore the emperor found himself under the necessity of sending an army to oppose them, and they were again driven back to their inaccessible mountains.

The Dacians revolted about the same time with the Britons, but they were likewise repelled, and many of their barbarous neighbours, who heard of the victories of the emperor, sent deputies to him, desiring him to take them under his protection. Some of the most superstitious among the pagans, particularly the priests, had cruelly murdered many of the Christians; but the emperor, although strongly attached to the idolatry of the heathens, yet published an edict, by which he commanded that none of those oppressed and innocent people who lived without giving disturbance to the government, should be in the least injured. He had the utmost aversion to war, unless when it was for the preservation of the empire, but for all that, no part of his character was ever stained with so much as the bare imputation of cowardice. He took care that none of those who attended him in the palace, should abuse

abuse his clemency, by extorting bribes from those who came to solicit favours, and as a man of learning himself, he gave encouragement to all those who by their merit seemed worthy of his notice.

Adrian had obliged him to adopt Marcus Aurelius for his son, and accordingly having married him to his daughter, he sent for Apollonius from Greece, to instruct his son-in-law in the principles of philosophy. This shewed the good sense of the emperor, for he was convinced that no person designed to govern an empire, could ever acquire too much knowledge.

During the summer, he usually retired for a few weeks to a country seat, which he had at Lormum near Rome. It was there that he was seized with a violent disorder in the seventy-fifth year of his age, after a most prosperous and peaceable reign of twenty two, being upwards of fifty when he ascended the throne. With respect to the character of this emperor, little can be added to what has already been said. He was an eminent, nay, a most striking example of what sovereigns may do, when they can be prevailed upon to consider the reciprocal connections that subsist by nature and policy between them and their subjects. Some princes make no other use of their power than to oppress their subjects, and gratify their own violent passions ; but Marcus Antoninus seemed to live only for the people. He considered himself as only one part of the body politic, and he did not disdain to hear in the most attentive manner, the complaints of the poor and needy.

No person who solicited a favour ever went from his presence with a denial, unless his request was of a nature that it could not be granted without committing injustice. In a word, he was in the whole of his conduct an ornament to human nature, the honour

honour of the regal dignity, the father of the people, and a bright example to be copied after, by succeeding princes.

Marcus Aurelius, whom Antoninus had adopted as his successor, pronounced the funeral oration of his father-in-law, and took into partnership with himself in the government, Lucius Verus, the son of Commodus, an intimate friend of Adrian's, and one whom he would have appointed his successor, had not he been too old and infirm to manage the affairs of government.

Whatever monarchs may think when they admit any person to share the government with them, yet every true philosopher will consider such an act as inconsistent with true policy. If the co-adjutor, or person thus advanced as an associate with the reigning prince, has the least spark of gratitude remaining in his nature, he must be directed in all his actions by his generous benefactor, and consequently his power is only nominal.

On the other hand, if he is a person of a domineering, ambitious spirit, he will not easily be brought under any sort of controul, and the prince who advanced him to power and honour, will find his own life in danger.

Marcus Aurelius had many virtuous qualifications, which, if operating without the restraint of an associate, might have made the people happy, but Lucius Verus gave the most unbounded scope to his passions, which he indulged in such a manner, that the people in general were corrupted thereby. This created discontents among the senators, for whatever was proposed by the one emperor was opposed by the other.

The barbarians who inhabited the territories adjoining to the Roman empire, became every day more

more and more expert in the art of war, and their numbers encreasing daily in consequence of their frugal way of living; they took the field, and spread desolation wherever they came. The Parthians, under Vologesus, their king, penetrated into the interior parts of Syria, where he put all the Romans to the sword, while the Catti crossed the Rhine, but were driven back to their inhospitable mountains by Victorinus who commanded in those parts. As for the Britains, who lived in the northern parts of the island, and who had never submitted to the Roman yoke, like their more pusillanimous brethren of the south, the return of the season served only as a signal for them to commence fresh hostilities. They broke down the two walls erected by Julius Agricola and Adrian, and marched, without opposition, into the interior parts of Brigantia, since called Yorkshire. There indeed they were met by Cabiburnius, the Roman praefect in Britain, who drove them again to the north, though not till they had committed the most horrid murders.

Verus, who was as destitute of true courage as real virtue, yet could not help boasting of his superior knowledge in all military affairs, and therefore he proposed going against the Parthians, who had spread terror and desolation in many parts of the East. Aurelius, accompanied him part of the way, and not only gave him the best advice for the regulation of his conduct, but also appointed some of his most faithful friends to attend him in person, that he might discharge his duty consistent with the obligations he was under to the commonwealth. But nothing could persuade Verus to harken to the voice of reason, for the further he proceeded on his journey the more abandoned he became

became to all sorts of debauchery. This voluptuous way of living was even superior to any thing the Romans had ever seen in the nations conquered by them, and while his lieutenant was gone against the common enemy, he spent great part of his time in the pleasant gardens of Daphne, a most beautiful village near Antioch.

The success that attended the Roman arms in the East, was much greater than might have been expected, especially when it is considered what a voluptuous person Verus was, but then it must be considered that his lieutenants were men of the most undaunted courage, and the strictest integrity; they drove the Parthians back to their own country, and destroyed the antient and famous city of Babylon, spreading the terror of the eagles wherever they came.

Verus, however effeminate and addicted to his pleasures, resolved to appropriate to himself all the honours acquired by those brave men who fought under him, while he was indulging himself in every sort of sensuality. Nothing less than a public triumph, to which he had not the least title, would satisfy his ambition, and therefore having appointed a person, in whom he thought he could confide, to be king of the Armenians, he returned to Rome, and was received with all the acclamations of joy by the people, who seldom look further into things than the exterior appearance.

Aurelius, who during the time that Verus was in the East, had continued in Rome, applied himself to the discharge of all those duties incumbent upon him as a sovereign, and rectified many of the abuses that had crept into the different departments of the state. He never undertook any thing of importance without consulting the senate; but although

though he did every thing in his power to make his subjects happy, yet he was sorry to find that few persons ever approached him without communicating to him accounts of the numerous vices of his colleague. In order, if possible, to reclaim Verus, he sent him his daughter to Antioch, where they were married, but still no good consequences flowed from this act of the emperor's, although he did it for the best. Lucilla, the daughter of Aurelius, was a woman of an ambitious discerning spirit, and finding her husband like herself, she did every thing she could to encourage him in his vices.

This was a most mortifying consideration for the virtuous Aurelius, and what added still to it was, that when Verus returned to Italy, where he thought to have awed him by his own presence, he became more vicious than ever, nay even more so than he had been represented. His army while in the East had been infected with the plague, and the fatal contagion communicated itself to the inhabitants of the different cities through which they passed.

The misery of the people subject to the Roman emperor was now so great as even to exceed description. The provinces were in a manner depopulated by famine and pestilence, while the barbarians penetrated even into Italy. The aid of superstition was called in to animate the people, but that not having the desired effect, the priests stirred up the people to persecute the Christians, under pretence that the gods were angry because they were suffered to worship their Saviour, and the only true God. This occasioned a most violent persecution of the Christians, throughout all the provinces of the empire, so that many of the most

pious

pious men amng them suffered martyrdom. In this reign, Justin, a celebrated philosopher of the stoic sect, having embraced the Christian religion, drew up a most learned and elegant apology in favour of the persecuted people, which he presented to the emperor, but such was the strength of ungovernable popularity, that he was put to death.

Aurelius finding every thing in the utmost state of confusion, resolved to oppose the enemy in person, and taking Verus along with him, came up with the Maccommanni, a fierce barbarous people, who had penetrated as far as Aquilla. There he obtained a signal victory over them, and in order to improve it to the best advantage, he pursued them across the Alps, and returned to Italy with only the loss of a few men, when compared with the difficulties he had encountered.

A. D. Verius did not live to see Rome a second time, for being seized with a most violent disorder on his journey home, he died in the thirty-ninth year of his age. Many persons, on account of the suddenness of his death, imputed it to poison or some other unfair means, but as nothing of that nature was ever proved against the persons suspected, so we may naturally look upon the report as having no real foundation in truth.

The death of Vernus obliged the emperor Aurelius to attend in the most assiduous manner to the affairs of government, and for that reason he married his daughter Lucilla, the widow of Vernus, to Claudius Pomponius, a man of the most strict integrity and irreproachable life, although his parentage was rather mean, and his fortune small. Indeed the emperor was so much in love with vir-

ture, that he admired it in whatever station he found it, let it be of ever so low or humble a rank.

The Marcomanni, notwithstanding their recent defeat at Aquileia, and the number of men they had lost, made another incursion into Italy, being joined by the Quadi, another nation of barbarians. For some time they proceeded on their journey without meeting with any interruption; but Aurelius having left Rome came up with them, and once more drove them beyond the Alps. The fatigues that the emperor underwent in this expedition were such as might have been expected in such climates as he passed through, but he was enabled to bear them in consequence of reducing the principles of the stoic philosophy to practice. Ever abstemious, he taught moderation by his example, and patience so difficult in general to be exercised was practiced by the most common soldiers, who all strove to vie with each other in imitating the conduct of their leader.

Having obliged the barbarians to accept of peace on the terms that he thought proper to propose, he returned to Rome, and set himself about reforming such abuses as had been too much countenanced during his absence. He enquired into the characters and conditions of individuals, and either redressed their grievances or supplied their wants. He discouraged all sorts of luxury, as tending towards corrupting the morals of the people, and, upon the whole, left nothing undone to make the people as happy as is consistent with a state of human nature.

Aurelius was one of these sovereigns who prefer the arts of peace to all the blandishments of war, but when the necessities of the state required

his assistance he never hesitated to march in person at the head of the army. He loved peace, but nothing could induce him to court it in an inglorious manner, nor could he be persuaded to remain in his palace, while the safety of his subjects required his presence in the most distant provinces of the empire.

The barbarians whom he had lately subdued, once more took the field, and made several incursions into the most interior parts of Gaul. But Aurelius marching against them, crossed the Danube on a bridge of boats, and reduced their villages and huts to ashes. But these advantages were dearly bought, for the barbarians resolving to make one vigorous effort to regain their liberties or perish in the attempt, led the Romans by feigned retreats into some of the vallies at the foot of their mountains, where they were on the brink of being cut off.

The emperor, sensible of the distress of his army by this imprudent action, did all he could to animate his men, but still they appeared dejected, for so violent was the heat, and so little were they acquainted with the country, that nothing but immediate destruction seemed before them. They were unable to advance, and they knew not in what manner to retreat, as their enemy had surrounded them on every side, and all was given up for lost.

It is inconsistent with the dignity of history to insert any thing that seems contrary to natural reason, although corroborated by the recent testimony of those writers who lived near the time when the fates are said to have taken place, and yet I am obliged to mention an incident which makes no small figure in the writings of the fathers of the fourth

fourth century. We are told that one of the Roman legions under the command of the emperor, was wholly composed of Christians, which is not in the least improbable, when we consider how far the gospel had spread even before that age. We are farther told that this legion joined in prayer to heaven for rain to allay the raging calls of drought in the army, and that a plentiful shower immediately followed as an answer to their petition. At the same time thunder and lightning so discomfited the enemy that they fled in the utmost disorder, and were mostly cut to pieces by the Romans. We are taught by the principles of our holy religion, not to look upon any external occurrence as a mark of the divine favour, because God for many wise ends unknown to us, often suffers vice to triumph, while the most virtuous are left to suffer all that malice can invent or cruelty inflict. But whatever truth may be in this narrative, certain it is that the emperor conceived such an opinion of the sincerity of the Christians, that he wrote to the senate in their favour, ordering all edicts against them to be utterly cancelled.

Having thus terminated the war, Aurelius thought to have spent the remainder of his days in tranquility, and in supporting the rights of his subjects; but new dissensions arose, of which it could not be supposed that he could have the least suspicion.

Most of the victories obtained over the Parthians had been owing to the prudence and conduct of Avidius Cassius, who enjoyed a large share of the emperor's favour. This commander being well acquainted with the military art, brought the army under proper discipline, and banished from the camp every thing that tended towards corrupting

ing their morals. But still ambition was his ruling principle, and therefore by his influence over the soldiers, he got himself proclaimed emperor while he commanded in Syria.

In order to ingratiate himself with the people, he propagated that he was descended from the famous Cassius, who had assisted in murdering Julius Caesar, and that his sole intention was to restore the Roman people to those privileges of which they had been so long deprived by usurpers and tyrants. By such pretences, and at the same time giving out that Aurelius was brought over to his party, many people of the east eagerly flocked to his standard. On the other hand, Aurelius told the soldiers, that his love for the Roman people was so great, that he had no objection to divest himself of the sovereignty, if another more properly qualified could be found to succeed him.

Avidius, who knew that unless he improved the advantages he had gained, he would never be able to get his title as emperor recognized by the Roman senate, marched into Greece, in order to bring those provinces over to his interest, but his lieutenants who could not bear with his haughty disposition, entered into a conspiracy against him, and he was assassinated by the soldiers. His head being cut off it was brought to the emperor, who so far from testifying his approbation of the death of a Roman, who had fallen a sacrifice to his ambition, ordered it to be interred in the most honourable manner. Such as had joined in the conspiracy with Avidius, were in general pardoned, nor were any put to death, for the most obnoxious were only banished for a few months, and then recalled, and reinstated in their former rights and privileges.

Soon

Soon after this, the emperor went on a journey to the East, when his wife, the empress Faustina died in consequence of a violent distemper, with which she had been seized. She was a woman of an extreme loose character, and many of her actions seemed to reflect dishonour on the emperor, but either his natural goodness of heart, or the regard he had for the character of his wife, prevented him from taking such advantages of the public clamour, as he otherwise might have done. He ordered that she should be interred with all the honours peculiar to her rank, and the senate decreed a public triumph to her memory, merely from their motives of respect to the emperor.

LETTER L.

WE have already seen how attached this emperor was to the civil interests of the people, nor was he less careful of learning, for on his return from the east, he visited Athens, and reformed several abuses that had crept into the public schools. Such of the professors as were most celebrated for their extensive knowledge of the sciences, he advanced to great honours, and settled upon them genteel salaries. From Athens he proceeded to Rome, after he had been absent eight years, and to give the people a convincing proof of his real benevolence, he published an edict remitting all the debts owing to the public treasury during the last sixty years.

As he found himself advancing in years, he admitted his son Commodus as a partner with him in the empire, and retiring to one of his most delightful country seats, he devoted his time to

study and contemplation, from whence he received such pleasure as the virtuous only can feel. The learned men of every denomination throughout the empire were more immediately taken notice of by him than by any of his predecessors, for he knew the value of literary merit, having made great progress as an author, as appears from his most excellent writings. His frugal manner of living enabled him to do many good actions, and happy is that prince or even peer who follows so bright an example.

But this most excellent of men, and truly great emperor, did not long enjoy his delightful state of tranquility, for news was brought that those numerous barbarians, the Scythians, had taken up arms, and were ravaging the frontier provinces of the empire.

The love of his people was too deeply rooted in his heart to suffer him to remain inattentive to any thing that related to their safety. He resolved to take the field, and when he communicated his intentions to the senate, they begged that as his life had been so precious to them, he would leave them the best advice he could give. This he complied with, and spent three days in delivering lectures, inculcating the purest morality as the rule of their future conduct in life. He told the senate that he had no property of his own, and although they offered him the public money to defray the expence of the war, yet he would have it looked upon as the property of the whole community, and not of himself as an individual. Having taken leave of the senate and the people in the most affectionate manner, amidst the lamentations, blessings, and prayers of thousands of his people, he marched against the enemy, and notwithstanding his advanced

vanced age, yet his presence, as well as his example, enabled the soldiers to oppose a thousand difficulties, in climbing mountains, fording rivers, cutting down woods, and preventing themselves from being surrounded by the enemy, who knew every place in the country.

He drove the barbarians back to their inhospitable deserts, and during two years that he continued in those parts, he took every precaution to prevent their future incursions; but a life so valuable, and too much so, for the Romans was now drawing to a period. During his march, the third year, to oppose the Scythians, he was taken ill at Vienna, and, although neither afraid to die, nor fretful against Divine Providence, yet when he considered the unpromising conduct of his son Commodus, he was filled with anxiety both for him and the people.

Tortured with these thoughts, he sent for as many of his attendants as could be admitted into the chamber, when the dying emperor addressed them in words to the following import
" My dear friends, I am now going to retire
" from the theatre of this world, where I have
" endeavoured to act my part according to the best
" of my judgment. My son will now lose a fa-
" ther in me, but my dear friends, let me beg
" that you will all be fathers to him, so that when
" I am no more, he may be more happy than
" when I was with him. Teach him to despise
" riches any farther than they can be useful, and
" that no prince can be so secure as he who reigns
" as an object of veneration in the hearts of his
" people. Advise him to avoid pride, for that
" generally ends in cruelty, and few cruel prin-
" ciples and qualities in a man K.4 against his flattery ces
" 200

100 The ROMAN HISTORY,

“princes live long. If you attend to what I have
“now told you, you will have an emperor formed
“by yourselves, and you will reap the benefit
“thereof as long as he lives.”

He had scarce done speaking when the violence
of his disorder encreased so fast, that he was obliged
to desire them to withdraw, and next day he ex-
pired, to the inexpressible grief of every lover of
virtue, and the irreparable loss of the Roman
people.

Such was the end of an emperor who seemed
formed to acquire solid glory, and real greatness.
Not the glare of conquest, but the approbation
as arose from the hearts of such as was made
happy under his government. Glory seemed to
leave Rome with the greatest man that ever sat
upon the throne: nature had done her best to
form a compleat emperor, and his innate qualifi-
cations had been illustrated and brought to a
state of perfection by the most excellent learning,
regulated by judgment and prudence.

Virtue was, by his example, wrought up to
the utmost height, but from that time it began to
decline. From that period learning was more
and more neglected. The Roman language de-
clined in consequence of the encouragement that
was given to the Greek, and betwixt a contention
which was the most superior both were neglected, and
both sunk down to a barbarous jargon. Their
historians from this period were no better than
verbal narrators, who delivered their accounts of
events in the most lifeless frigid manner, and stu-
pidity seemed to be advancing fast towards gaining
a superiority over the mind.

Marcus Autelius died in the fifty-ninth year of
his age, after a most glorious reign of nineteen years
and some few days.

No

A. D. No sooner was the death of this most excellent emperor made public at Rome, **180** than the people paid that tribute of tears to his memory, which his virtues had a right to demand. They were at the same time unanimous in the choice of his son as his successor, and the election was confirmed by the senate and the army.

Commodus was only about nineteen years of age when his father died, and as he was very much attached to trifling diversions, especially such as depended upon dexterity, and as his mother was a woman of a loose character, so the people circulated a report that he was not the son of Aurelius, but of a gladiator, whom Fustina had admitted to a share of her bed, while the emperor was about one of his expeditions. But his attention to these exercises led him to neglect those of a more important nature; for wantonness, cruelty, and every species of vice, seemed so interwoven in his character, that he became daily more and more a slave to them.

As is common on the commencement of every new reign, he was received by the people with the greatest applause, and they began to imagine that he would imitate the virtues of his father. But those hopes soon vanished, and the son of the most virtuous emperor that had ever graced the regal dignity, plunged himself into the most odious and unnatural crimes; for he seduced the daughters of the most eminent citizens, and even committed incest with his own sister.

Every place of trust, honour or profit was conferred upon wretches like himself, who had no regard to the interests of the people, and as they were his companions in unlawful pleasures, so they strove to enrich themselves by every cruel action that they

could invent or reduce to practice. His principal favourite (for like all weak princes he must have one) was Perennius, a mean, avaritious wretch, who oppressed the people in so cruel a manner, that a dangerous conspiracy was formed against the emperor.

Lucilla, his sister, with her husband Pompeianus, were concerned in this dangerous affair, and one Quintianus, a desperate fellow, was employed to assassinate him. Quintianus, however, acted in so imprudent a manner, that he was taken into custody before he had an opportunity of perpetrating the fact, and in order to avoid the torture, he made an ample discovery of all his accomplices.

In consequence of this information, Quintianus himself, with Lucilla and Pompeianus, were publicly executed, and many of them who were perfectly innocent, shared the same fate, while Perennius seized on their estates, and appropriated the whole rents of them to his own use, not doubting but he would have it in his power to make himself emperor. To facilitate his scheme, he endeavoured to bring over some of the legions to his party; but the emperor, who now seemed to begin to have some regard for his own honour and interest, ordered both him and his party to be put to death.

The detection and suppression of those conspiracies might have awakened Commodus to a sense of duty, and convinced him of the obligation he was under to imbibe the virtues of his father; but instead of that his security only encouraged him in the commission of fresh crimes, and fresh conspiracies were daily forming against him. So true was that saying of the late emperor, that no prince could be so safe, although surrounded by numerous armies of guards and partisans, as he who had acquired by acts of *benevolence*

benevolence the good will and affection of his Subjects.

A violent insurrection broke out in Spain under the direction of one Maturinus, a savage barbarian, who ravaged several of the Roman provinces, and even aspired at the regal dignity. This scheme, however, had not the desired effect, for by some acts of imprudence the whole was discovered, and the principal persons concerned in it, were first put to the torture and then executed.

It was remarkable of Comodus, that although he could not conduct any affairs of state without a favourite, yet most of those who obtained the largest share of his friendship and confidence, fell in the end a sacrifice to his ungovernable passions. Some of those whom he had raised to the highest honours, were in an instant ordered not only to be degraded, but also at the same time to suffer by the hands of the common executioner.

Nor did his own relations fare better, for he ordered his wife Crispina and Faustina, his father's cousin, to be put to death, as if they had been common malefactors, for no other reason than that he might get rid of the one, and possess himself of the fortune of the other. Nay, he even went so far as to pardon those who committed the most atrocious crimes, in consequence of their paying him a sum of money. In a word he became as ridiculous as Caligula, and as cruel as Domitian; for not content with the ordinary and common honours that were paid him, he ordered that the people should rank him among the gods, and offer to him divine sacrifices.

The neglect of public affairs, owing to the conduct of the emperor, encouraged the barbarians to make new incursions into the frontier provinces, among

among whom the most active seems to have been the Scots and Picts, who invaded the southern part of Britain, and demolished the greatest part of Adrian's wall. It is true, these barbarians, with several others, were repulsed almost as soon as they made their appearance, but the emperor was now become so odious to all ranks of people, that his destruction seemed in a manner unavoidable. Like Domitian, he kept a list of those whom he intended to put to death in his closet, and that being discovered by a boy, whom he kept for an unnatural purpose, it was brought to Marica, one of his concubines. The consequence was, that he was soon after dispatched in the thirty-first year of his age, to the great joy of the Roman people.

A. D. 192 Commodus being thus dispatched, the people made choice of ¹⁹² Helvius Pertinax to succeed him, one of the most extraordinary persons in the age in which he lived. His father had been a slave, but such were the merits of the son, that from the most obscure original, he arose gradually to the highest dignity without a friend at court to support his interest. Besides several expeditions against the Parthians, he had been sent over to command in Britain, where he endeavoured to correct such abuses as had crept into the army, but his zeal for the public service had near cost him his life.

The soldiers, who had long been accustomed to licentiousness, mutinied against him, and he was left for dead on the spot, along with some inferior officers, who were actually slain. But notwithstanding the great loss of blood from the wounds he had received, yet he recovered, and by a perseverance in duty peculiar to one of his undaunted spirit,

spirit, he resumed his former authority, and brought the legions under a proper discipline.

Having driven the northern barbarians home to their barren mountains, and settled the affairs of Britain in a proper manner, he was recalled and sent to command in Africa, where several of the tributary states had revolted against the government. From Africa he returned to Italy, and being tired with the fatigues of war, he resolved to spend the rest of his days in retirement, but Commodus, who knew not how to govern, made him praefect of the city.

He accepted of this high office with the utmost reluctance, for being well acquainted with the abandoned character of the emperor, he doubted not but he would fall a sacrifice to his cruelty, as many other worthy persons had done. That such were his suspicion is evident, from the manner in which he received the members of the senate, who came to congratulate him on his new dignity as emperor, the same night that Commodus was murdered. He told them that he had long expected death in a violent manner, and that although his conscience convinced him that he had done his duty to serve his country, yet he was willing to submit to his fate with a becoming resignation.

The deputies did not leave him long in suspense, for taking him to the camp, he was proclaimed amidst the shouts of the army, people, and senators. All ranks of people, not only in Rome, but even throughout the most distant provinces, approved of the election, and Pertinax began his reign in the most prosperous manner.

He was now far advanced in years, but he took care to discharge every part of his duty with so much wisdom and moderation, that the citizens began to consider

consider him as another Aurelius. The mean hireling courtiers, who by their councils had corrupted the mind of the late emperor, were punished in the most exemplary manner, and the sums of which they had robbed the people, were seized, and brought into the public treasury, in order to support the government against the common enemy.

He ordered the buffoons who had been so much caressed by Commodus to be sold as slaves, well-knowing that they corrupted the minds of youth, and he endeavoured to put the prætorian bands under such regulations, as should prevent them from injuring the citizens. Every person was admitted to his presence who had any thing to offer for his immediate consideration, and that justice should be admitted to the whole empire, he never neglected an opportunity of attending the senate. He was so much feared by the barbarians near the frontier provinces, that they trembled at his name, and were glad to lay down their arms rather than provoke such an experienced warrior to wreck his vengeance upon them. But all his attempts to reform the state, proved ineffectual. The prætorian bands had been so long accustomed to live in the most licentious manner, that they considered themselves injured by the emperor, whom they represented as avaritious, and as one, who under the pretence of reforming abuses, wanted only to enrich himself. These turbulent soldiers resolving to set up an emperor of their own, made choice of Maternus, a senator, to be emperor, but he refused to accept of the honour, and then they offered the purple to Falco, another of the senators, who was not so averse to the honour, but the senate would have put him to death, had not Pretinax interested himself in his favour, and saved him.

him from the rage of the people, although he was his most inveterate and professed enemy.

Disappointed in these schemes, the praetorian soldiers resolved not to act any longer in a hidden manner, and therefore marching in a body, they surrounded the palace, while all those whose duty it was to have protected the emperor, fled, and left him exposed to the malice of his enemies.

Some of his friends would have persuaded him to make his escape, and throw himself into the arms of the people, but he told them his whole conduct had been free from blame, and therefore he was resigned to his fate.

He had some hopes that his presence would intimidate the soldiers, but he was mistaken, for they had been too long accustomed to living in the most licentious manner, to pay any regard to the most unspotted virtue. No sooner had he made his appearance at the gate, than one of the soldiers struck him with a lance, and soon after he was murdered, after receiving a great number of wounds. Such of his attendants as stood by him were murdered in the same manner, nor did any of his family escape except his son and daughter, who had the good fortune to save themselves by flight.

Such was the end of Pretinax, after a reign of only three months, in which time he gave the people a specimen of that happiness which they had reason to expect from his moderate and equitable administration. Few men ever rose to so high a station by the mere force of merit, and we read of but few who came to a more unworthy fate. It may serve to shew, that a standing army and the liberties of the people are in their own nature incompatable. The

A. D. The names of some individuals, who have been in different ages and nations advanced to the regal dignity, are of little more service than to fill up a blank in chronology, and point out the steps necessary for directing the student in his journey. Some indeed have made themselves great by their crimes, and acquired a name at the expence both of honour and conscience. Many of the latter Roman emperors were a disgrace to human nature, and it must be acknowledged that the vices of the people were such, that neither could find fault with each other.

No sooner had the soldiers murdered Pretinax, than they marched out of the city to join their companions, and not doubting but the people would endeavour to revenge the death of the emperor, they took care to fortify their camp in the strongest manner they could.

Finding that none of the people took up arms against them, they became more bold than ever, and even proceeded to such a scandalous height in licentiousness, that they offered the empire to sale to those who would bid most for it. Shameful as this proposal was, yet two men were found to bid for it, namely, Sulpicius, the son-in-law of Pretinax, and Didius, a celebrated lawyer, and esteemed the richest man in the city, most of his wealth having been acquired in the most iniquitous manner.

Didius was sitting at dinner with his friends when he received the news that the empire was put up to sale, and not doubting but he would have it in his power to offer more than any other person, he left his house and set out for the camp. He was immediately received by the soldiers with the utmost applause, for although Sulpicius had got there before him, yet having nothing but promises to offer,

Didius

Didius was taken into the camp by the help of a ladder, and every one swore to stand by him to the last. The soldiers, who were ten thousand in number, marched with their mock emperor to the city, but the people poured out upon him the most horrid execrations as he went along.

Few of the senators attended to receive him, and when he spoke to them, which was in a very laconic manner, they seemed to look upon him in the most contemptible light. The senate, however, were too weak and intimidated to dispute his title, after he had distributed a million of money among the soldiers, and therefore they gave their suffrage without any opposition.

Didius was now in the fifty-seventh year of his age, and as most of his former time had been spent in attending to business, he longed to taste the sweets that arise from an enjoyment of affluence, without any regard to those duties incumbent upon him as the sovereign of Rome. He was naturally easy in his temper, but that served rather to injure him than to promote his interest.

His vast affluence had been acquired by avarice, nor could he divest himself of that passion, even after he was advanced to the state of regal dignity. He began to regret that his fortune had been squandered away among the soldiers, and as he thought of abridging their pay, they were so enraged that they resolved to devote him to destruction. Indeed, there was no great wonder the soldiers should have hated him, for he was utterly unacquainted with the military art, and an entire stranger to those qualifications necessary to constitute the character of one who may be supposed under the necessity of commanding armies.

It

It is at least some comfort to a prince to find that when he is rejected or despised by one body of his subjects, that he is esteemed by the other. But Didius had not this consolation, for he was equally hated by the people and the soldiers. Indeed, his own mind was so vain, and so little acquainted with the stimulating motives that lead to true glory, that when the citizens mocked him, he would turn to them and beg their pardon in the most abject manner.

But it could not be supposed that such a pusillanimous wretch would be suffered to remain in safety at Rome, while so many able generals were commanding in the provinces. The two most accomplished of these commanders were Septimius Severus, who was praefect of the German legions, and Pose-nius Niger, governor of Syria. Niger, who had acquired the good will of the army, was proclaimed emperor of the east, where his title was recognized, and acknowledged by all the governors of the provinces.

Severus, who was an African by birth, did not lose any opportunity of ingratiating himself with the soldiers under his command; and as he knew that Pretinax was their great favourite, so he insinuated that his sole design in aspiring to the purple was to revenge the death of that emperor.

Didius, who had never seen a military engagement, was terribly alarmed when he heard that Severus was marching against him, and therefore he procured the senate, by the influence of bribes, to declare him an enemy to the commonwealth. But that was no more than matter of form, and forms are of little service when opposed by power. Distracted in his own mind, and not knowing whose

advice to take, he at last resolved to make Severus his partner in the empire.

This proposal, however, was rejected by Severus, and the senate, who despised Didius, told him that if he could not command the legions, he was not fit to govern the empire. Accordingly, the consuls having convened the senate, ordered Severus to be proclaimed emperor, and Didius, who had purchased the empire, was obliged to submit to an ignominious death.

He met death in the same pusillanimous manner in which he had lived, for when the executioners seized him, he cried like a child, but they paid no regard to his tears, nor shewed him any other respect than if he had been a common malefactor. His head was cut off and placed on the front door of the senate, where he had often pleaded as an advocate, and his name was ordered to be erased out of all the public records.

L E T T E R L I.

A. D. **A**S soon as Didius was dispatched, the senate sent deputies to invite Severus to 195 take upon him the government of the empire, and accordingly he marched to Rome with the utmost expedition. He was now about forty years of age, and being a general of the most consummate prudence, he ordered that all the soldiers of the prætorian guards should lay down their arms, and meet him without the gates of the city.

Mortifying as such an order must have been to men who had long made and unmade emperors when they pleased, yet they were obliged to comply, and meet the emperor with branches of laurel in their hands,

hands, which they did as a token of their submission to his authority. But Severus was too well acquainted with their practices to admit them to any share of his friendship or confidence. He ordered them to be stripped of all their military habits, and to be banished from Rome, to which they were not to return under the severest penalties. This act of his power was consistent with the obligations he was under to provide for his own safety, and as soon as they were gone, he marched into the city, attended by those legions who had for several years distinguished themselves under his command.

His accession to the empire, although not attended with much difficulty, yet did not seem to prognosticate the most promising hopes. By birth an African, the Romans considered him as one too subtle to be trusted, and doubted not but he would, by the most refined strokes of policy, put an end to the few remaining privileges they had left. Indeed, people seldom know the nature of liberty till they have lost it, and they endeavour to regain it when it is too late.

Severus found himself under an absolute necessity of marching to the east against Niger, who was considered as an emperor in that part of the world, and in order to facilitate his measures, he seized the children of those who were in Niger's army, in order to keep them as hostages till he saw what would be the consequences of the war. He secured, by several favours, the friendship of Clodius Albinus, commander of the army in Britain, and at the same time gave him reason to believe that he would adopt him for his successor in the empire. Having taken these prudent measures, he began his march to the east, and met Niger on the plains of Jeffus, where Alexander defeated Darius, and overthrew the Persian

sian monarchy. Severus obtained a complete victory; for the soldiers who fought under Niger were too much sunk in all manner of sensuality, to resist the courage of those brave men who had acquired laurels under their intrepid commander in Europe. The unfortunate Niger was taken prisoner, and his head being cut off, was fixed on a pole and carried through the army as a trophy of victory. The Parthians, and some other eastern nations, had taken up arms in defence of Niger, or rather for the sake of plunder; but Severus marched against them, and obliged them once more to submit to the Roman yoke.

Peace being established in the east, Severus resolved to destroy Albinus, for all the promises he made to him were merely of a fallacious nature, and such as he had no intention of adhering to, so as his expedition was attended with success. He sent some persons privately to Britain, promising them great rewards if they would assassinate him, but Albinus had secret notice given him of their intentions, and therefore resolved to be upon his guard.

In the mean time, Severus marched from Asia to Gaul, where he was met by Albinus at the head of a numerous army, who had unanimously declared him emperor. For some time the contending parties kept at a distance from each other, but at last there being an indispensable necessity that they should come to a general engagement, one of the most bloody battles was fought that we meet with in history.

The engagement began in the morning, and lasted till night, when Severus fell from his horse, and his troops began to give way. In that critical moment, Sextus, one of those who commanded under Severus, advanced with a body of reserve that had

had been kept back to cover a retreat, endeavouring to take the present advantage of both, and make himself emperor.

The troops under the command of Severus took fresh courage when they saw Sextus advance, and being strangers to his real motives, they fought with such fury, that Albinus's forces were defeated, and himself slain. Severus ordered his body to be treated in the most ignominious manner, and such of the senators as were taken prisoners, he ordered to be put to death, and their bodies to be quartered.

Severus having thus triumphed over his most formidable enemy, left Gaul, and set out for Rome, not depending upon the fidelity of the people, but the power of a standing army, whom he had trained up, and whom he loaded with the treasures arising from the sale of such estates as had been forfeited. From Rome he marched to the east, in order to oppose the Parthians, and left the government to the care of Plautina, a man whom he had brought over to his interest, by marrying his son Caracalla to his daughter.

His success in the East was equal to what might have been expected from so experienced a commander, for he not only reduced the Parthians, who had taken up arms, to obedience, but also carried his conquests throughout all Syria and Egypt, obliging those nations to submit to the Roman yoke, and pay an annual tribute to the Emperor. Upon his return to Rome, he was received in the usual manner by the people, namely, with every demonstration of joy, but Plautina, who had some thoughts of making himself emperor, employed a Tribune to murder both him and his son Caracalla.

Perhaps

Perhaps this event might have taken place had not the tribune gone and informed Severus, who sent for Plautina, and upbraided him for his perfidy. Plautina confessed his guilt, and the emperor, to give an instance of his clemency, resolved to pardon him, but his son Caracalla followed him out of the palace and stabbed him dead.

The next thing we find this emperor engaged in was, the reformation of many abuses that had crept into the government of such cities as lay near Rome, all of which he visited in person, and displaced such magistrates as by their conduct had made themselves most obnoxious.

The Caledonians, and other northern barbarians who inhabited that part of Britain now called Scotland, had made so many incursions into the provinces of the southern part of the island, that the Romans were on the brink of destruction, when the emperor resolved to visit the place, and put an end to these disorders. In order to make his two sons acquainted with the art of war, he took them along with him, leaving Geta to command in the southern provinces of Britain, while Caracalla accompanied him to the north.

The hardships sustained in his march to the north were the greatest that we find mentioned in history, and as he found it utterly impossible to bring the Picts and Caledonians to submit to the Roman yoke, he took an oath of homage from those who inhabited Valentia, that part of Scotland lying between the Forth and the Tweed; he built the famous wall still known by his name, extending from the Solway Frith to the eastern part of Northumberland, near the influx of the Tyne into, the German ocean. Some parts of this wall are still remaining, and may serve to convince us, in the present

present age, that the Romans were the most indefatigable people in all their undertakings.

Having received the submission of some of the unconquerable northern barbarians, who only waited for new opportunities to begin their incursions into the Roman province : Severus returned to York, then one of the most celebrated cities in Britain. Worn out with the fatigues of war, and distressed in his mind to see the conduct of his son, Caracalla, so inconsistent with the station for which he was designed, he began to sink under the decay of nature, and, to add to his misfortune, he received the disagreeable news that the soldiers had revolted, and declared his son emperor of Rome. Severus no sooner heard this mortifying news, than raising himself from his bed, he commanded his son, and those who adhered to him, to be brought immediately into his presence. The reputation he had gained, obliged them to comply, and coming before the emperor in the most submissive manner, he first put them in mind of their duty and then freely forgave them.

Soon after this he paid the debt of nature at York in the sixty-sixth year of his age, after having been emperor of the Roman people about eighteen years. In some cases he acted consistent with justice ; but it often happened that his justice bordered upon cruelty, so that although some persons have extolled his virtues, yet none of them were of such a nature as to be of any benefit to the public.

A. D. 211. Severus, by his will, ordered that his two sons, Caracalla and Geta, should succeed him in the empire, but no action could be more imprudent, although it may be considered as consistent with those affections which parents naturally have to their children. Geta was

of

of a meek mild disposition, but Caracalla was fierce, and cruel, so that it could not be supposed they would agree long together.

Caracalla, resolving to be without a rival in power, resolved to make away with his brother, and in consequence of that resolution, barbarously murdered him, giving out, as a vindication of so horrid an act, that he was forced to it from motives of self-preservation. By a profuse distribution of his favours, he brought the soldiers, as well as the senators, over to his party, and by their united assistance, he was declared sole emperor of Rome, and began his reign with such acts of cruelty as soon convinced the people that they had made an improper choice.

He ordered some of the most reputable of the Roman citizens to be put to death, among whom was Papinian, the famous lawyer who refused to plead in defence of his conduct. Every officer appointed by his brother Geta was put to death, so that the people saw revived in this monster all the crimes of Caligula, Nero, Domitian, and such other wretches as had disgraced the seat of regal dignity.

He took so much pleasure in executions, even of the innocent, that at one time he ordered the soldiers to fall upon a body of the people in the theatre, for no other reason but that of their having disengaged a charioteer, of whom he was extremely fond. He had no confidence in any but the soldiers, whom he was obliged to keep steady to his interest by great rewards, extorted from the defenceless people. His next resolution was, to visit the more distant provinces of the empire, and accordingly he marched with his army through part of Germany into Macedonia, and then passed

over to the Lesser Asia, to visit the ruins of Troy. From Asia he continued his march to Egypt, where because some persons had ridiculed his person as well as his vices, he ordered so many innocent people to be slain, that their blood ran in streams into the Nile.

He visited Parthia, desiring Artabanus, the king, to give him his daughter, but that was no more than a feint to get him into his power. Artabanus, not suspecting the least injury, went to meet the emperor, attended by a great number of his subjects unarmed, and Caracalla, like an abandoned cruel monster of guilt, ordered that the wild beasts which he took along with him, should be let loose upon them, by which many of them were killed, and the king himself narrowly escaped.

His heart corrupted as it was, could scarce invent new crimes, for upon his return to Rome, he proposed marriage to the mother of Geta, his brother, for this woman was the second wife of Severus. Whatever might be her sentiments, or whether she complied with his unnatural request from motives of fear, is not certainly known; but their nuptials were celebrated in the most public manner, to the great scandal of Rome.

But his crimes brought fear along with them, for he was so conscious of his being hated by the whole body of the people, that he ordered the astrologers to be consulted concerning the manner and time of his death. Marternianus, one of his chief favourites, was employed in this business, and he willing to ruin Macrinus, another of the officers of state, he caused a letter to be conveyed to the emperor, in the most private manner, intimating that Macrinus had a design against his life; but although the letter was delivered to the emperor, yet he never

read

read it, but gave it to Macrinus, who was most terribly alarmed to find an accusation of that nature preferred against him by an anonymous writer. Convinced that he had some powerful enemy near the person of the emperor, he resolved to save himself by the destruction of the tyrant. For that purpose he made choice of one Martial, a centurion of the guards, whose brother had been put to death by the order of Caracalla. This Martial was a man of great personal strength, he was often near the emperor's person, and his desire of revenge was so strong, that he did not regard what became of himself, so as he could see the tyrant murdered.

An opportunity was not wanting long; for one day, while the emperor had retired to a private place at one of his country-houses, Martial followed him, and stabbed him dead on the spot. Martial attempted to save himself by flight, but he was overtaken by some of the German horsemen, who without waiting to bring him to a tryal, killed him, and then threw his body to the dogs.

Such was the end of Caracalla, a wretch of whom it may be said, "That cruelty, and the most abominable crimes were so much studied and practiced by him, that he even reduced wickedness to a system." His example diffused itself throughout all the empire, and the people sunk into sloth, while the soldiers increased in power, and at last trampled on every right without the least regard to justice.

Macrinus had acted in so private a manner in the affair of murdering the emperor, that no person suspected him as concerned. He was a man of some reputation for his courage, and therefore the soldiers elected him emperor, which was confirmed by the senate. This emperor was a

native of one of the remote provinces in Africa, and had raised himself from the office of a centurion to the highest station in the army, and at last was advanced to the purple in an accidental manner.

In his time Artabanes, king of Parthia, invaded some of the Roman provinces, in order to be revenged for the horrid act of cruelty in Caracalla, who destroyed so many of his nobles, by letting loose among them the wild beasts. Macrinus went to oppose him, but finding the Parthians extremely numerous, he rather chose to make peace, than run the danger of supporting an expensive war. He was very rigid in his military discipline, for he made several attempts to reform the army, but this with some other circumstances, hastened his end.

Caracalla had left a natural son named Heliogabolus, or priest of the sun. He was not above fourteen years of age, but extremely handsome, and greatly beloved by the people of Emessa in Phænicia, where he then resided with Mosa, his grandmother, an ambitious woman, and possessed of great riches. She was not ignorant that Macrinus was hated by the soldiers, and by the most insinuating means she could invent, Heliogabolus was introduced to the soldiers, who proclaimed him emperor.

Julian was sent against Heliogabolus by Macrinus, who was then at Antioch, but his whole army mutinied, and cut their leader in pieces. Macrinus finding himself in such a critical situation, marched against the legions, who had revolted, and both armies met together near the borders of Syria, where the emperor was defeated, and with much difficulty saved his life by flight. He disguised himself, and travelled to Chalcedon, where he and his son Diadumenus were both discovered and put to death by the soldiers.

Marinus

Macrinus could not have expected a much better fate than he met with, for he knew that no emperor could be safe, unless he made himself sure of the army.

The election of a boy to govern the Roman empire, was one of the greatest insults that could have been offered to the people, but then it must be observed that a minor is always the most agreeable sovereign to venal favourites, and an army ruined by licentiousness.

A. D. 218. The young emperor was indulged in every vice, and the representations which his courtiers have given us of his actions, points him out as one of the most horrid monsters that ever existed in the world. Like Caligula, he ordered that the people should worship him as a god, and was so ridiculous as to pretend that he was married to the moon. His palace was the receptacle for the most odious prostitutes in Rome, and he even built a senate for them to assemble in. Indeed, he is represented as committing such horrid crimes, that it is not consistent with decency to mention them.

But these ridiculous follies, by which he degraded the nature of man, were even exceeded by many acts of the most horrid cruelty. Sometimes he would order the wild beasts to be let loose upon such as came to visit him, and while they were devouring them, he laughed with as much seeming pleasure as if he had been seeing a public entertainment in the theatre.

At other times, as if the lives of men had been of less value than the meanest reptile, he would often order his guests to be smothered, or put to death in whatever manner his cruelty could invent. That nothing might be wanting to complete the catalogue of his crimes, he pretended to foretel future events,

by inspecting the entrails of human creatures, and for that purpose sacrificed some of the most handsome youths that could be found either in the city or the provinces. His horrid cruelties became so conspicuous, that the praetorian bands mutinied, being encouraged thereto by his grandmother Mosa, who had raised him by her intrigues to the purple, and Alexander, a young prince, related to Heliogabolus, was made coadjutor with him in the empire. The tyrant, conscious of his crimes, and well-knowing that he must one time or other suffer a violent death, began to make preparations for it in the most whimsical manner. He also attempted to poison Alexander, and actually gave out that he was dead, which so much enraged the soldiers, that in order to appease them, he took the young prince in his chariot to the camp.

He was now in the power of the army, and although he attempted to make his escape, and for some time concealed himself in his palace, yet they found him, and having dispatched him, large stones were tied to his body, and the whole sunk in the

Tiber. Such was the end of Heliogabulus in the eighteenth year of his age, after an odious reign of four years. His mother, relations, and favourites all shared the same fate, with this difference, that the most obnoxious were put to more severe torments than the others.

The latter period of the Roman History A. D. 222 is the most insignificant of the whole. We find 222 are more destitute of materials to the enumeration of general or particular facts, than in the age of Scipio and Hannibal. This must be ascribed to the decay of learning, when few persons made history their study, nor indeed any other science. Alexander, &c. &c.

Alexander was only sixteen years of age at the time he was proclaimed emperor, but according to all the accounts that we can find of him, he was one of the most accomplished youths that had ever been raised to the most dignified station.

His mother Mammæa, a woman adorned with every virtue, advised him to preserve the love of his subjects, by abolishing such institutions of an iniquitous nature as had been established during the reign of his predecessor. Sabinus, a learned senator, and Ulpian, the famous lawyer, were persons in whom he reposed the greatest confidence, and by their advice he would not suffer any place to be sold, for those who purchase places must sell justice. Such of the magistrates as were found guilty of taking bribes, he ordered to be punished in the most exemplary manner, nor could any thing less than the most unfeigned virtue and integrity, recommend a person to his notice as an object of his favour. Every distinguishing honour was conferred on such as discharged their duty with fidelity, and he would often put them in mind that he was indebted to them.

He ordered that the Christians should be allowed to meet in public to worship God according to the dictates of their conscience, and such cruel edicts as had been issued against them by former emperors, were cancelled. Nor was he less attentive to the army, for many of the barbarians having made incursions into the frontier provinces, he put the legions under proper discipline, and took care that their wages should be paid them in a regular manner. A lover of virtue, and conscious of having practised it, he resolved to take the field, for such was the state of the empire, that he found it necessary to march against his numerous enemies in

person. He defeated the Persians, and retook the cities of Babylon and Ctesiphon, obliging the inhabitants once more to acknowledge the Romans their superiors.

Nor were his arms less successful in other parts of the empire, for Varius Macrinus defeated such of the Germans as had revolted; Junius Palmatus reduced the Armenians, and Furius Celsus returned from Africa crowned with laurels.

While the emperor was at Antioch, his mother Mammæa sent to Alexandria for the famous Christian divine, Origen, to converse with him on the principles of religion, and having heard him with the greatest attention several days successively, she was so much taken with his engaging manner, and the truth of what he advanced, that she sent him home under a safe guard to his native city.

LETTER LII.

BUT notwithstanding the many virtues of this emperor, yet Rome was hastening to decay. Luxury had destroyed the small remains of patriotism in the capitol, and the barbarians were become so expert in the art of war, that they made annual incursions into the frontier provinces, carrying fire and sword wherever they came. The Germans came in such numbers into Italy, that the emperor was obliged to march against them in person, for like Marcus Aurelius, he never thought any hardship too great where the liberties of the people were in danger.

His success was equal to his courage, but some of the legions who had been corrupted by the example of Heliogebolus, refused to submit to the strict discipline

discipline enforced by the emperor, and being spirit-ed up by Maximin, an old experienced general, Alexander and his mother were both put to death in their tents.

He was one of the best men that had been raised to the purple since the death of Titus, for he had all his virtues without any of his vices. He was only in his twenty-ninth year, and his reign had been one continued act of prudence, virtue, and moderation. A man of his spirit might, in some other age, have restored virtue to the common-wealth, but the soldiers were become too licentious, and the intestine wealth of the state had been ex-hausted in defending the frontier provinces.

A. D. Maximin, who had been the chief in-strument in putting Alexander to death,

235 was immediately proclaimed emperor by the soldiers, who raised to that dignity every one whom they imagined would rule most consistent with their own inclinations, and grant them an un-limited power to domineer over the people.

This Maximin was one of the most extraordinary persons of whom we have an account in history. He was originally the son of a poor peasant in Thrace, and for some years followed the employ-ment of a shepherd. He was in stature above eight feet high, with a body proportionable thereto in strength. In feats of activity, he was the most re-markable in that age, and the emperor Severus ha-ving taken notice of him, admitted him as a soldier in his guards. Caracalla advanced him to the degree of a centurion, and sometime after being made a tribune, he spent the greatest part of his time in reforming such abuses as had crept into the army. He refused to serve under Macrinus, because

he had murdered his master, and in the reign of Heliogabalus disdaining the wretched effeminate life of that emperor, he retired to his native country, and spent some years in cultivating a farm, rather than to serve under a wretch, who in the whole of his conduct was a scandal and a disgrace to human nature.

Alexander made him commander of the fourteenth legion, and by his care and affiduity, the soldiers were brought under the strictest discipline. He marched with them against the Germans, and obtained so many victories, that he was looked upon as one of the bravest and most experienced generals that had ever commanded under the Roman emperors. Great hopes were formed by the people of the happiness they would enjoy under this emperor, but their disappointment was equally great; for according to all the accounts transmitted to us concerning him, he was one of the most execrable tyrants that ever existed. He was qualified by nature, and a low, vulgar education, to make a distinguishing figure in an inferior station, but no sooner was he advanced to power, than he considered himself as uncontrollable, and resolved that the terror of his name should command the obedience of the people, even in the most distant provinces.

The senate refused to confirm his election, upon which he ordered that such as were most obnoxious to be put to death, and regardless of weak forms, made himself emperor, well-knowing that where power is wanting, law is weak. He was the first of the Roman emperors who had claimed this power, but then he was not ignorant that the power of the senate was no more than an empty name.

The

The Christians were persecuted in the severest manner throughout every province in the empire, for no other reason but that they had been protected by Alexander; but this only served to carry the gospel into many remote nations where it was before unknown. He seized on the estates of the richest patricians, and because he could not bear that any person should ridicule the meanness of his birth, he ordered all those to be put to death who had known him while in an humble station. These cruelties would have made him odious to all ranks of people, had he not taken care of the provinces by the utmost exertion of military skill. He increased the pay of the soldiers, and in order to chastise the Germans who had taken up arms, he marched against them, and destroyed their cities with fire and sword. He fought in every engagement at the head of his legions, being determined that his presence should animate the soldiers, who could not without the just imputation of cowardice, refuse to imitate the example of their leader. But the glare of his conquests could neither procure him the love of the people, nor the fidelity of the army. His cruelties had disquieted the Roman people in general, and several conspiracies were formed against him, particularly by the soldiers, who proclaimed one Quarcanus to be emperor, because Maximin had dismissed him from all his employments.

Quarcanus, so far as we are able to judge from a variety of circumstances, was forced by the soldiers to accept of this new honour, but within a few days after he was declared emperor, the person who had been most active in supporting him, stabbed him in bed, and carried his head to Maximin, who after testifying his gratitude, ordered the assassin to be put to death.

Much

Much about this time the provinces in Africa, who had been subjected to the most excessive taxations, revolted, and put to death several of the Roman officers. Sensible that the tyrant Maximin would wreck his vengeance upon them, they resolved to make choice of a head, and therefore Gordian, their proconsul, was elected emperor.

Gordian was then far advanced in years, and therefore he said all he could to dissuade the soldiers from their purpose, but in vain, for they constrained him to accept of the dangerous honour, in concert with his son Gordian, whom they appointed to be his coadjutor. This imprudent step occasioned an universal scene of riot, murder and bloodshed throughout the whole empire, for parties were formed in every province, according to their different inclinations, and many persons were murdered in the most cruel manner, without regard to the laws or the most sacred rights of society, which obliges subjects to protect each other.

Maximin no sooner heard the news of what was carrying on against him, than he raged like a madman, but being desirous to keep the soldiers attached to his person, he promised them the greatest rewards, and began his march to Rome, in order to quell such insurrections as had happened in that city. The soldiers promised obedience, but they were composed of so many different nations, and so loaded with baggage and incommoded with slaves, that they rather resembled the army of Darius than those brave veterans who had fought under the antient Roman conquerors. Capelianus, who commanded in Africa, obtained several advantages over the insurgents, and murdered most of the citizens of Carthage, loading his soldiers with plunder, and telling them that it was his duty to do so, in order to
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revenge the insults that had been offered to Maximin.

In the mean time, notwithstanding a variety of difficulties that he had to encounter, Maximin marched to Rome, filled with rage, and wishing for new opportunities of wrecking his vengeance upon those whom he considered as his enemies. The senate knew that they had no reason to expect any mercy, and therefore meeting together in the temple of Jupiter, they made choice of Balbinus and Pupienus to be emperors, who raised what forces they could, in order to oppose the tyrant, and these marched against him under the command of Pupienus.

Scarce had Pupienus marched from Rome, when two soldiers attached to Maximin raised a sedition in the city, and having gathered together a great rabble of people, many of the innocent inhabitants were murdered in cool blood, so that every street was covered with dead bodies.

Maximin continued his march with the utmost expedition, but the senate, who had resolved to stand by their new election of emperors, sent orders to all the forces in the northern parts of Italy, to do every thing possible to harrass his army, by preventing them from getting provisions. The city of Aquilea, which had hitherto continued firm to his interest, refused him admittance, upon which he resolved to take it by storm; but the besieged made such a vigorous defence, that he resolved to block it up, by preventing the country people from bringing in provisions.

Maximin, who could set no bounds to his passions, ordered several of his commanders to be put to death; but the soldiers, ever impatient of restraint, formed a strong conspiracy against him, which they put

put in practice, by murdering both him and his son in their tents.

Such was the end of Maximin, a man formed to make a considerable figure in an humble station, but not fit to command an empire. Brutal in his manners, and totally unacquainted with government, he became a most cruel tyrant as soon as he was advanced to the purple, and has by his actions caused his name to be transmitted to posterity with infamy.

A. D. 236 It would be happy for the people in general if the murder of a merciless tyrant prevented the repetition of his crimes; but it has not been able to effectuate so valuable a purpose.

Pupienus and Balbinus, the two new emperors, were both men of age and experience, but they were not destitute of human passions. Disputes arose between them upon the pretence of superiority, which was equally claimed by both, while the praetorian bands resolved to make a new election.

Indeed, they did not think of a proper person to be made choice of as emperor till they had first dispatched those who had been raised to the purple by the senate. They marched in the most tumultuous manner to the apartments of Pupienus, and he finding himself in danger, sent to Balbinus, his colleague, for assistance, but he refused to comply with his request, having some hopes that the soldiers would make him sole emperor. In that, however, he found himself mistaken, for both the emperors were dragged from their lurking places, and put to death in the most ignominious manner. Their dead bodies were exposed in the streets in the most scandalous and inhuman manner, while the soldiers, who were

now the sole lords of the empire, returned to the camp in triumph.

We have already seen an instance of A. D. 238. the Roman empire being put up to sale, and such was the degeneracy of the times, that even a purchaser was found; but that was trifling when compared to some of the subsequent acts of licentiousness committed by the soldiers, who had bidden defiance to every moral obligation; who had made tyrants and unmade laws.

Triumphing over the late objects of their resentment, they went in a tumultuous body into the city, and meeting by accident with Gordian, the son of that Gordian who had been formerly declared emperor by the people in Africa, they proclaimed him emperor, and obliged the poor, mean, pusillanimous senate to confirm the election.

As Gordian was not above sixteen years of age, so they doubted not but they would have an opportunity of ruling both him and the empire. But the virtues of this young prince seemed to threaten the dissolution of that arrogant, unnatural system of power, first invented by ambitious heroes, and kept up in opposition to the laws by the arbitrary will of the army.

His mind was cultivated by the seeds of knowledge, far superior to his years, for he attended to the instructions of his tutors with the utmost care, and made a fine collection of books for his own use.

Misithæas, who had the principal share in the direction of his studies, was a man of universal knowledge, and the most unblemished morals. His integrity was unimpeached, and he directed his pupil in what manner to conduct the affairs of government

government so as to procure honour to himself and happiness to the public. But all the hopes the people had formed with respect to happiness under his reign vanished, in consequence of the continual incursions that were made by the barbarians. The Scythians and Persians revolted at the same time, while the Goths poured in upon the Roman provinces, like a deluge sweeping all before them.

Gordian, with his tutor Mithæas, whose daughter he had married, marched against the Persians, and defeated them in a pitched engagement, but the brave and the wise Mithæas died soon after, not without suspicion of his having been poisoned by means of one Philip, an Arabian, who soon after got himself proclaimed emperor, and Gordian was put to death, in the twenty-second year of his age.

A. D. 243. The election of Philip to the empire by the soldiers, was in the usual manner confirmed by the senate, who were obliged to comply with every thing proposed to them. The father of this Philip had been captain of a band of Arabians, who robbed and plundered all those who came in their way, and no sooner was he advanced to the purple than he appointed with himself in the empire his son, a boy not above six years of age.

Having settled the affairs of the East in a very partial and superficial manner, without any regard to the interests of the republic, he set out for Rome, and it being then exactly one thousand years since the building of the city, he ordered the secular games to be exhibited with the utmost magnificence. Some of the inhabitants have asserted that he was converted to Christianity, but this seems

seems altogether impossible, for it cannot be supposed that the disciples or followers of Christ would have admitted one as a member among them, whose life was stained with the blackest crimes. The history of these ages is so much impaired by the iniquity of time, and the want of good authors, that we are often led to rest on probable conjecture, instead of real traces of facts.

This, however, is certain, that Marinus who commanded under Philip, being sent against the Goths, who had taken up arms, he revolted from his duty, and persuaded the soldiers to proclaim him emperor. But he did not long enjoy his new honour, for the soldiers ever precipitate in their choice, and averse to subjection, dethroned the pagent whom they had set up, and then put him to death. Philip having received news of this insurrection, and the death of Macrinus, sent Decius, one of his chief lieutenants to command the army in his stead; but no sooner had he joined the legions, than the soldiers who had the highest notions of his military courage, insisted that he should assume the purple.

Decius, who appears to have been a perfect master of disimulation, complied with the requests of the soldiers, but at the same time sent word to Philip, that self-preservation had obliged him to take such a step. This was undoubtedly a very specious pretence, and such as might have done very well with one less acquainted with human nature than Philip, but that emperor, conscious of his critical situation, set out to meet Decius, whom he came up with near Verona, where one of his own soldiers struck off his head. He was a cruel inhuman tyrant, and his death gave the utmost satisfaction to the Roman people in general.

Decius

A. D. 248. Decius was declared emperor in the midst of intestine divisions, and it was imagined by some, that his conduct would have reconciled all the contending parties, and restored discipline in the army, so as to bring the soldiers under proper subjection. It is even said of this emperor, that he was so earnest to preserve the esteem and good-will of the people, that he gave them leave to chuse a censor, who was on every occasion to take notice of his public conduct. But the greatest virtues even exerted in the most steady manner, are often lost when contentions arise in the commonwealth.

The Christians were now become very numerous in the Roman empire, and in consequence thereof the respect that used to be paid to the old religion of the heathens, gradually wore off. This induced Decius to issue a severe edict against the Christians, which, although he knew it to be in its own nature inconsistent with sound policy, yet he was obliged to give way to it, and many thousands of those innocent people were put to death in the most cruel manner. In vain were the most cruel tortures used to make those people deny their Divine Redeemer, for in consequence of the persecution, their numbers daily increased, and to use the words of the Apostle, "they became more than conquerors, through him that loved them." But the opposition between them and the heathens was such, that the emperor unacquainted with religion in general, was obliged to give way to the most powerful party.

The persecution carried on by the heathens against the Christians, wasted the interior power of the empire, and the Goths taking advantage thereof, spread devastation through all the frontier provinces.

provinces. Courage, the distinguishing part of this emperor's character, induced him to take the field, and he obtained a signal victory over his enemies; but Gallus, who commanded under him, and who aspired at the purple, led him into a defile, where he was defeated, and seeing his son killed on the spot, he clapped spurs to his horse but was swallowed up in a quagmire after his whole army was routed.

In some instances he has been considered as a most excellent prince; and, although he persecuted the Christians, yet that part of his conduct seemed rather to flow from political notions, than as the genuine dictates of his heart. This, however, should teach sovereigns while entrusted with power, not to issue orders of a coercive nature, till they have properly enquired whether the safety of the state required them.

A. D. 251. Decius being thus no more, Gallius was declared emperor by the soldiers, and the senate in conformity with their former conduct, confirmed the election. Having made peace with the Goths on the most dishonourable terms, he returned to Rome, with no other view, as it would seem than to give an indulgence to his pleasures, and by plunging himself in all manner of sensuality, become an object of ridicule to every sober man in the empire, who wished well to the interests of the commonwealth.

But although he was received at Rome in the usual manner, amidst the acclamations of the people, yet his happiness was of short duration. The barbarians, who by bribes had been for some time induced from making incursions into the provinces, resolved to take the advantage of the emperor's neglect, and in consequence of that resolution, Rome itself

itself was threatened with immediate destruction. A famine raged at this time throughout all the provinces of the Roman empire, and Gallus who had given himself up to sloth and sensuality, suffered the obsolete edicts against the Christians, to be put in force with the utmost rigour. This with some other unpopular parts of his conduct, brought on his ruin, for finding himself under the necessity of opposing Æmilius, one of his generals, who had taken up arms against him, they came to a general engagement in Mesia, where Gallus was killed, to the great joy of the Roman people, who had long groaned under the oppressions they had suffered in consequence of his administration. He was a faithless friend, a cruel master, and an imperious sovereign, and his name must be considered as one of those blots that stain the Roman annals.

A. D. 253. However nauseous it is to be continually repeating crimes, yet historical exactness requires it, and I am now under the necessity of telling you, that although Æmilius had got himself declared emperor, yet the soldiers were not content with the election, and, therefore, having killed him, Valerian was made choice of to succeed to the purple.

Valerian was one of those who in an advanced age of life, endeavours to bring about a reformation, but the disputes between the Pagans and the Christians were carried on with so much heat, that he was obliged to comply with those in power, and in consequence thereof, all those who adhered to the religion of Jesus, were tortured in such a manner as is shocking to human nature.

This impolitic conduct of the emperor was attended with a train of other evils, for intestine dissensions

visions are sure to lead to foreign wars. The barbarians, who had now acquired the art of war, in consequence of opposing the Romans, were become so formidable to their haughty antagonists, that they paid no regard to the limits of the empire, but burst in upon every province with the most undaunted fury.

In every place usurpers set up for themselves, while the Persians, ever impatient of restraint, made a most distinguishing figure under their king Sapor, who invaded Syria, and carried destruction along with him. In one of these engagements the emperor Valerian was taken prisoner, and having been treated in the most inhuman manner, his eyes were put out, and then he was flead alive as the last act of savage cruelty.

With respect to his character, it is of a problematical nature, for virtues and vices were so blended together, that we cannot tell which of them were the most predominant, only that the empire between the two, fell a sacrifice to the iniquities of the times.

LETTER LIII.

A. D. **G**ALIENUS, the son of Valerian, was elected emperor in the room of his father, but he being quite addicted to luxury, no great benefits were to be expected from what he did in the administration of public affairs. This indolent conduct of the emperor was the more to be wondered at, as the northern nations, as well as those in the east, were daily pouring in in vast numbers. In vain did the people in the provinces solicit for protection against the barbarians;

barbarians ; there was no army to oppose them, nor money in the treasury to defray the necessary expences. Weak and inactive, Galienus ever lent a deaf ear to the intreaties of his people, while many of the governors of the provinces declared themselves absolute sovereigns, independant of Rome. Thirty petty tyrants declared for themselves at once, and nothing but slaughter, pestilence, and every other calamity was to be met with in the provinces.

Indeed the interior state of the empire was corrupted, and the baleful influence diffused itself to the most remote parts. Power in one place created a tyrant, and the same power in another threw him down. The names of these tyrants are not worth being recorded, nor has history transmitted their actions to posterity ; they rose by murder, and some were cloathed with the purple where they died violent deaths.

The Roman empire, like the ruins of a stately palace, was now beginning to fall in pieces ; it was like a city half reduced to ashes, or a country depopulated of its inhabitants. The barbarians having approached as far as Millan, Galienus found himself under the necessity of going in person to oppose them, but there he was killed by his own soldiers, who hated to serve under so voluptuous and pusillanimous a commander.

A. D. 268. **Flavius Claudius**, a man of great abilities, was elected by the army, and the senate, to the great satisfaction of the people in general, who ardently wished to be under the government of a prince who could unite moderation with valour. Historians are not agreed concerning his origin, nor is it of great service to know, for although superior merit may reflect lustre

lustre on the most dignified families, yet it can receive none from them. His vast abilities enabled him to oppose the numerous barbarians, and although he was not able to restore the grandeur of the empire, yet for some time he procured the people a temporary respite.

The Goths had over-run all Greece, where they not only murdered the innocent inhabitants, but destroyed the noble buildings, and reduced the libraries to ashes. Three hundred thousand barbarians sailed down the Danube in search of new conquests, and the Roman empire seemed like an helpless orphan, left with an affluent fortune, but devoured by merciless claimants.

Cláudius, notwithstanding the formidable opposition making against him, yet nothing could intimidate him; nay, like all great men, the more numerous the difficulties, the more active he was in making the necessary preparations. At Milan, he defeated Aureolus, one of the tyrants, and from thence marching with what forces he could raise, he defeated a numerous army of the Goths, making prisoners of such as escaped the sword, and selling them as slaves to the people. The same prosperous effects attended his army in every part of the empire, so that for some time the barbarians were obliged to remain quiet in their inhospitable deserts. The Germans, who had revolted, were likewise subdued by the emperor, but in his last expedition, which was against Tetricus and Zenobia, he was seized with a violent fever, which put an end to his life, after a reign of near two years, in which he had done more real service to his subjects, than some tyrants do in a century.

When we consider the time in which he lived, and the depravity of manners that took place, we are

are naturally led to compare him to a bright star, breaking out in the obscurity of the night. All the virtues of the greatest emperors were centered in him, and happy for Rome had he lived longer.

A. D. 270 The accomplished Claudius being now no more, a tumult arose among the soldiers concerning the person whom they were to make choice of as his successor. Quintilian, the brother of the deceased emperor, thought to raise himself to the purple; but finding himself obnoxious to the soldiers, he ordered his veins to be opened, and bled to death.

Aurelian, a native of Dacia, who had by merit alone raised himself to be master of the horse, was made choice of by the soldiers, and his title confirmed by the senate. He was one of the most extraordinary persons in that age with respect to personal courage, and that made him the more proper for governing the empire at a time when it was infested by the barbarians on every side.

Some of the tribunes among the antient Germans having taken up arms, this active emperor marched against them in person, and defeated them with great slaughter.

Zenobia, a queen of the most masculine disposition, and better acquainted with the military art than many of the warriors of that age, had established an empire in the east, disclaiming all connection with the Romans any farther than as an enemy. Aurelius, in his wars against this Amazonian queen, met with many difficulties, and he gave such proofs of his moderation as could not fail of endearing himself to all ranks of people without exception.

To stimulate his soldiers to conquest, he often made rash oaths that if he was victorious he would not leave one of the inhabitants alive, but in order

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to indulge his natural love of mercy, when any place surrendered, he was sure to tell the soldiers that he had been warned by an apparition not to execute the intended massacre;

Zenobia, with an army as well disciplined as any that Asia ever had produced, met Aurelian near Emessa in Syria. The courage of the soldiers, who composed the army of Zenobia, was greater than that of the Romans, but then it was like a flame that is soon extinguished. The Roman discipline, and an unshaken perseverance, enabled the legions to decide the fate of the day, and Zenobia, hitherto victorious, was obliged to take refuge in the famous city of Palmyra. She expected to have received succours from some of the neighbouring nations, but these being intercepted by Aurelian, she made her escape from Palmyra, disguised in the habit of a shepherdess. Parties, however, were sent after her, and she was brought back to the emperor Aurelian, who referred her to be an honour to him in his triumphal entry to Rome. At the same time the city of Palmyra submitted, and Longinus, the greatest philosopher, and the most eloquent orator of that age, was put to death for no other reason but that he had been the secretary and counsellor of queen Zenobia.

The depravity of the times induced this emperor to exercise more severity towards those who offended than is perhaps consistent with humanity, but there was an absolute necessity, consistent with the doctrine of retaliation, that those who are guilty of cruelty without remorse, should be punished without mercy.

The innocent Christians were accused by their enemies of being disaffected to the emperor, and several edicts were issued against them, but few of

them were ever put in execution. The severities of this emperor were carried to the highest extremity, but at last they hastened on his destruction. Inadvertently, he threatened to put Menestius, his secretary, to death, and as that officer, from some parts of his own conduct and a perfect acquaintance with the disposition of the emperor, had no reason to expect any mercy, he resolved to preserve his own life at the expence of his master's. Accordingly, he made out a list of the principle men in the army, whom he pretended were to be put to death, and having shewn it to them, they unanimously joining in a conspiracy, murdered the emperor near Byzantium, in the sixty-third year of his age, and the fifth of his reign. He was a man of great activity, undaunted courage, steady perseverance, and might have acquired immortal honour, had he lived in virtuous times when such severities as he practised were not necessary.

A. D. 275. The conduct of the soldiers in dis-

posing of the empire in whatever manner they pleased, had brought the sovereign authority into so much contempt, that few who had the least regard to their own safety, would consent to accept of it. The senate were afraid of the army, and the lieutenants who commanded the legions, could not agree among themselves. Each party pretended their want of abilities in making a proper choice, for this plain reason, that let the conduct of the emperor be ever so inconsistent with the nature of his duty, the fault would in the end be imputed to those who had chosen him. The senate, at last, after much altercation between them and the army, made choice of Tacitus, a man of great reputation, and much esteemed by the people in general. He was then seventy-five years old, and no way ambitious.

of the honour which the senate had conferred on him.

His reign began with some acts of political justice which in their own nature seemed to border on cruelty. Meneslaus, who had been principally concerned in the murder of the late emperor, was impaled alive, his body was then thrown to the dogs, and his estate forfeited for the use of the public.

This emperor, who was elected at an age when others even resign all connections with temporal things, had good natural parts, and was a lover of universal learning, and did every thing in his power to reward learned men.

But it could not be expected that a man so far advanced in years could live long, and he died within six months after his election, he sunk under the decay of nature, while he was marching to oppose the Scythians, and some of the eastern nations, who had broke into the frontier provinces of the empire.

In that degenerate age, when offices were given away in consequence of the corrupt notions and ungovernable passions of the soldiers, it was not an easy matter to bring about an election without tumult. Some of the soldiers on the death of Tacitus, proposed that his brother Flavian should be emperor; but the majority being against him, he laid violent hands on himself. Probus, a native of Pannonia, was made choice of by the army, and as he had been brought up in the camp from his youth, great hopes were formed of his superior abilities. He was no sooner invested with the purple, than he marched against the Germans, whom he defeated, and from thence into Dalmatia against the Sarmatians, who threatened

to carry the flames of civil war into the center of Italy. Undaunted with the number of difficulties that opposed him, he forced the Goths to submit to such terms as he thought proper to prescribe. Many of the rebellious nations in Asia submitted to him at the same time, but upon his return to Rome, he divided some of the frontier provinces among the barbarians, which was the most impolitic step he could have taken, because it gave them better opportunities of continuing their common invasions.

The confusion of the times encouraged many pretenders to set up for themselves in different parts of the empire, but they were wretches of such despicable characters, that they fell a sacrifice to their vices almost as soon as they made their appearance. However, the Goths, Huns, and Vandals, were now become too formidable for the Roman legions; and although many of their armies were defeated by the vigilance and courage of the emperor, yet they sole superior to every opposition.

At last this excellent emperor, after a reign of little more than six years, was murdered by the soldiers upon his return from an expedition against the Persians, for no other reason but that of having attempted to restore discipline among them.

The further we proceed in the Roman History, after the death of Trajan, it becomes more and more intricate, nor are we able on many occasions, to produce materials so as to conduct us through a labyrinth of confusion, distress, and crimes.

As soon as Probus was dead, the army, in their usual manner, elected Carus, *praefect*, to succeed him, who in order to make himself as popular as he could, admitted his two sons, Numerian and Carinus, to share with him in the government.

Numerian

Numerian was a youth endowed with many virtues that might have done honour to a throne, but his brother was a slave to such vices as were a disgrace to human nature.

Carinus was no sooner invested with the regal authority, than he found himself under the necessity of taking the field, for the Persians, as well as some other nations, had made incursions into the frontier provinces, and destroyed the places wherever they came. Carinus was a man of undaunted courage, and of such perseverance that no difficulties seemed too great for him to encounter. Accordingly, he marched against the Persians, and laid their cities and towns under contributions; but a dreadful storm of lightning arising, he was, with many other persons in the camp, struck dead. This happened before the emperor had an opportunity of making a proper use of the victories he had obtained, or establishing his power on a solid footing.

Numerian, who was then in the Camp, had the good fortune to escape, but he was so much affected with the death of his father, that it threw him into a most violent disorder, so that he was almost deprived of the use of his reason. He was carried about in a litter, and Asper, his father in law, having formed a scheme to make himself emperor, employed an assassin to murder him.

Asper took care to conceal the death of Numerian, so that he was carried about in the litter some days after his death, under pretence that his eyes were too weak to bear the light.

At last the smell became so offensive, that a discovery was made, and the soldiers were so much enraged, that they threatened to murder every one whom they suspected as guilty of so horrid a crime. But as a body must have a head, so the soldiers

made choice of Dioclesian to be emperor, who was no sooner invested with the purple than he put Asper to death with his own hands. Carinus, the other son of Carus, hearing of his brother's death marched against Dioclesian, but being odious to the soldiers, he was slain by one of his own tribunes, without coming to an engagement.

A. D. 285. Dioclesian at the time of his election, was about forty years of age, and being of mean extraction, he had raised himself to the highest offices by his merit, without any assistance from those in power, a circumstance that redounds much to his honour. He was much esteemed by the army in general, and the people began to form great hopes of living happy under his government. He seemed to consider clemency as necessary to secure the affections of the people, and therefore he granted a free pardon to all those who had taken up arms against him under Carinus. The barbarians, who had so long infested the Roman provinces, were now become more formidable than ever, and the necessity that Dioclesian was under to oppose them, induced him to take into partnership with himself in the empire Maximian, a brave general, but rather of a disobliging temper. By the mutual conduct of these men, many of the barbarians were driven back to their native forests, but still they were not subdued, for they only returned in order to acquire new strength, and invade the provinces with redoubled fury.

Maximian marched against the peasants in Gaul, who had taken up arms under Amandus and Heliatus, two adventurers, who aspired at the empire, but they were defeated and slain. Confusion took place in every part of the empire, for no sooner

sooner was one pretender destroyed than another started up. In Egypt Achilleos got himself proclaimed emperor, and Dioclesian marching against him, a most bloody battle ensued, but Achilleos was defeated, and the emperor ordered him to be devoured by lions; a punishment common in that barbarous age.

Much about the same time Maximian was obliged to march to Africa, where the legions had taken up arms against the government, and plundered the treasury of all the money they could find. In consequence of this combination among the legions, a bloody war ensued, but Maximian was at last victorious, though not without the loss of many men. In Britain every thing went into a state of confusion, in consequence of a free-booter named Carufius, who had taken up arms, and got himself proclaimed emperor by the army, who esteemed him as one of the bravest commanders in that age.

Constantius Chorus was sent into Britain to oppose this formidable adventurer, but he found him too well supported, so that he was obliged to enter into a treaty with him. At last Carufius was slain by Alectus, one of his most intimate friends, and peace was in some measure restored to the Britains, but the attention of the emperor was called to meet the Persians, who had taken up arms, and they were defeated with great slaughter, for however numerous their forces were, yet, the Roman discipline, even in those degenerate times, always proved an overmatch for them.

So far good success attended the arms of Dioclesian and Maximian, but the Goths, Vandals, and many other northern nations remained still unsubdued. Victories indeed were obtained over them, and

many thousands of them who had been made prisoners were sent as slaves to cultivate the southern provinces, but for all that their numbers seemed not to decrease. Every return of a new season brought them in innumerable multitudes into the provinces, for they were under the necessity of looking out for new habitations.

Dioclesian and Maximian, though men of great abilities, yet were too easily imposed on by such as were near their persons, and therefore an edict was published, by which the persecution against the Christians was again revived, and as it was the last, so accordingly it was the severest that had ever taken place. The cruelties inflicted upon these innocent people even exceeds description; the whole fury of the Pagans was let loose upon them for no other reason but that they would not sacrifice to idols, and unheard of tortures were invented in order to make them blaspheme their God. But every thing proved unsuccessful, for the Christians, notwithstanding their numerous and cruel sufferings, continued to increase; so true is that ancient saying, namely, "That persecution is the life of religion." This severity contributed much towards the destruction of the empire, for while the Romans were putting the Christians to death in the most horrid and cruel manner, the Goths and Vandals took fresh courage, and carried their arms into the midst of the provinces.

In the midst of these intestine divisions, and while the empire was surrounded and daily invaded by the barbarians, Dioclesian and Maximian, for reasons that are not well ascertained, resigned their dignity, and went to live in a private manner.

Dioclesian,

Dioclesian, who seems to have been a man of a contemplative mind, spent the remainder of his days in tranquillity, and although he was often solicited to re-assume his former authority, yet he told his friends, that he was too well acquainted with the toils of government to leave his beloved retreat.

He was one of the most active emperors that Rome had seen for many years, and although a man of a severe unobliging temper, and unforgiving nature, yet the barbarity of the times rendered such a conduct in some measure necessary.

Maximian lived some years afterwards, but being of a restless ungovernable disposition, he was continually engaged in hatching new plots, and at last was put to death in Gaul, by order of Constantius, whose daughter he had endeavoured to persuade to murder her father.

LETTER LIV.

A. D. **G**ALERİUS and Constantius Chlorus, whom Dioclesian and Maxi-

304. mian had adopted, succeeded them in the empire. They were men of tempers totally opposite, Galerius being courageous, but at the same time being a slave to vices of the most odious nature, while Constantius was remarkable for his humanity and universal benevolence.

It could not be supposed that men of tempers so totally opposite to each other could rule in one city or sit on one throne. It was therefore agreed upon that the empire should be divided between them in the following manner:

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Greece,

Greece, with such provinces in Asia as did acknowledge the Roman yoke, were claimed by Galerius; while Constantius Chlorus, more warlike, and less afraid of the toils of a camp, made choice of Italy, Gaul, Spain, Britain, and such provinces as had been conquered in Germany. The obligations the emperors were under in consequence of the distressed state of the empire, made it necessary that each should choose one to assist him, and the persons adopted were Maximin and Severus, so that the Roman empire, which had formerly groaned under one tyrant, now had four at the same time.

Constantius was a man of so much moderation and frugality that many of those who thought to have acquired fortunes by his liberality, upbraided him on account of poverty, which so little affected him that he openly told them the nature of his circumstances, upon which the people brought such sums to relieve his wants, that every one was surprised. This so much pleased the emperor, that turning to the soldiers, he told them in a smiling manner, that his subjects were the most proper persons to be trusted with the keeping of his treasure. He would not suffer the Christians to be molested, but ordered that all former edicts against them should be utterly cancelled. He had such just and elevated notions of morality, that when some nominal Christians whom he had been persuaded to dismiss from offices in his household offered to comply with the established religion, he told them that he could not put any confidence in those who were unfaithful to their own God.

The affairs of Britain, then in the most distracted state, required his presence in that province, and accordingly in the second year of his reign, having

ing left his son as an hostage with his colleague in the empire, he marched through Gaul, from whence he passed over to Britain, and fixed his residence at York, then the most flourishing city in the island.

While he resided at York, the legions under his command obtained several victories over the Caledonians, who inhabited the most fertile and delightful part of Scotland then called Valentia, comprehending the whole tract of land between the walls of Severus and Julius Agricolla. But the fatigues of war operating upon the delicacy of his constitution, he began to discover the symptoms of a consumption, and therefore in order to provide for the safety of his son, sent for him from Rome, to attend him in his last moments.

When Constantine arrived, his father was struggling under the decay of nature, but being altogether unimpaired in his intellectual faculties he recommended to his son to act with justice and moderation, and in a particular manner to extend his clemency to the Christians. He declared him his successor in the western empire. He expired in the arms of his friends, leaving behind him the character of a wise legislator, an able experienced general, and a most merciful prince.

The legions in Britain proclaimed young Constantine emperor of the West; but no sooner was the news thereof brought to Galerius, than filled with the most ungovernable rage, he set up Severus in opposition to him.

Maxentius, another pretender to the purple, started up at the same time, who, in order to ingratiate himself with the soldiers, gave them liberty to commit the most horrid acts of violence. Thus the empire was become the sport of fortune, nor

nor did the people know to whom they ought to be obedient. Severus marched to Rome, in order to oppose Maxentius, but his legions not abusing to fight any longer under his command, or rather wanting a new master, unanimously deserted him, so that he laid violent hands on himself. Galerius was so much enraged at the death of Severus, that he marched towards Rome, but his soldiers having abandoned him, he returned by the same way he came, and in a fit of madness made choice of Licinius, a poor obscure person, to be his partner in the empire. He did not long survive this effort of his power, for he died of a distemper that mocked the skill of the most learned physicians, after he had languished under it near a year.

He has been represented as a most cruel persecutor of the Christians, but some of those accounts seem inconsistent with the rest of his conduct. Certain it is, that a little while before his death, he revoked all the edicts that had been published against them, from whence we may infer, that if they were ever persecuted by his order, he became sensible of their innocence at last.

A. D. 311. It was wished by the people in general, that Constantine would assume the government of the whole empire, but he had several powerful rivals to contend with. Licinius and Maximin commanded in the east, where each had been acknowledged as Cæsars by the army, and although enemies to each other, yet they were united against him. Maxentius resided in Rome, from whence he issued his orders with the most dictatorial authority, and as he was a violent stickler for the religion of the heathens, so many of the principal citizens continued to support him. Constantine,

Constantine, either diffident of his strength in opposing such formidable enemies, or content with the portion of the empire that fell to his share, remained sometime inactive, and seemed to take no notice of the conduct of the other competitors. Great part of his army was composed of Christians, and as the people of that denomination were then become extremely numerous throughout the empire, it was reasonable for him to take every opportunity of ingratiating himself with them. Many of them were credulous even to a proverb, and upon that credulity, the artful Constantine resolved to raise himself to the imperial throne.

Eusebius, and after him some other ecclesiastical writers tell us, that while Constantine was one evening sitting in his tent, considering of the most proper methods that could be used in order to make himself sole emperor, the sky became illuminated, and he saw the cross with an inscription upon it, intimating, that if he adhered to the Christian religion, he would become victorious. The heathen soldiers in Constantine's army laughed at the account of the apparition, but the Christians being more numerous, they all adhered to him, and from that time he professed their religion in public, although he still refused to be initiated into their mysteries. This step taken by Constantine, shews him to have been a most consummate politician; for the Christian soldiers, many of whom had served under his father, were impatient of seeing him seated on the throne. Accordingly, he marched towards Rome, in order to meet Maxenius, who instead of using such political methods, had recourse to superstition, by consulting the augurs and the books of the sybils. At last, both armies met, and a most bloody battle ensued,

in which Maxentius was defeated and drowned, in attempting to cross a bridge on the river Tiber.

As soon as victory declared in favour of Constantine, he took possession of the city of Rome as one who had been elected, but as a person who had obtained the whole by conquest. He ordered, that the Christians throughout the different provinces of the empire, should be admitted to places of the greatest trust, honour and profit, that all acts or edicts made against them by former emperors, should be repealed, while every thing was done in order to discourage paganism. Indeed, the pagan religion had so long been esteemed by the Roman citizens, that no sooner did it cease to enjoy the support of power, than both it and the empire dwindled down to nothing.

In the mean time, while Maximin beheld with envy the success that Constantine had obtained over Maxentius, he marched from the east, but being opposed by Licinius, he was defeated, and obliged to shift for himself in the best manner he could. Still hopeful of success, he raised another army, but before he could do any thing to retrieve his lost honour, he was taken off by an uncommon, though a natural disorder, which the Christians, whose inveterate enemy he was, called a judgment from heaven upon him for his crimes.

The empire was now shared between Licinius and Constantine, but it was not to be supposed that two such formidable rivals would live long on good terms; they were opposite to each other in their interests; for Constantine, for particular reasons, did everything to favour the Christians, while Licinius, who seems to have been a professed pagan, did not fail to persecute such as were protected by his colleague.

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Thus religion being called in as an auxiliary to support political measures of ambition, both armies came to a general engagement. Constantine invoked Christ to assist him, while Licinius called upon the titular gods of Rome. At last victory declared in favour of Constantine, though only in a partial manner, for he was obliged to grant a truce to his competitor. The truce, however, was not of long continuance, for both parties once more took the field, and Licinius being defeated, was obliged to seek shelter in Nicomedia. To that province he was pursued by Constantine, and although his life was promised him upon condition of surrendering, yet no sooner had the emperor Constantine got him into his power, than he ordered him to be put to death, upon pretence that he was too great an enemy to the Christians, and too formidable a rival to be suffered to live.

L E T T E R LVI.
THE first thing done by Constantine after his enemies were subdued, was to publish an edict declaring Christianity to be the religion of the empire, and at the same time, as far as was in his power, to abolish heathenism. The bishops in the great cities were indulged with more power than was consistent with their characters, by which church power was founded, and in time established. He issued orders for deputies from the different orders among the Christian clergy to meet in one assembly, and by their unanimous consent, Constantine by the power of the emperor Arius, with some others then called heretics, were banished to the most remote provinces.

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In this manner he went on for some time, hated by the pagans, but admired by the Christians, while some crimes of the most odious nature stained the whole of his character. Fausta, his wife, a woman of a loose character, fell in love with his son Crispus, the fruit of a former marriage, which so enraged the emperor, that he caused them both to be put to death without so much as the form of a tryal. Many other acts of cruelty are recorded to have been committed by this emperor, but the accounts of those times are so confused, and so opposite to each other, that few of them deserve any credit. The heathens represented him a devil, while the Christians considered him as an angel.

In many other respects the character of Constantine is of a very dubious nature, but what he is most remarkable for, is that of contributing in a manner towards putting an end to the Roman empire. He had long been offended with the conduct of the Roman citizens, and therefore that he might have a body of people immediately under his own direction, and subservient to his wishes, he resolved to transfer the seat of empire from Italy to Byzantium, near the Bosphorus; where the Euxine and the Mediterranean seas are joined together by a narrow isthmus. The situation was as beautiful as could be imagined, and therefore he built that famous city, now called in memory of him, Constantinople.

This was one of the most impolitic steps that could have been taken by the emperor, for the Goths and other barbarians had been so long accustomed to consider Rome as the seat of empire, that no sooner did they hear that the emperor had removed to Constantinople, than they poured in almost innumerable multitudes into Italy, destroying every thing before them. Some of these barbarians were, in consequence of the vigilance of the emperor, driven back to their inaccessible mountains; but their numbers

increased so fast, that the whole power of the empire was found insufficient to oppose them. The greatest part of the empire was divided between his two sons, who acted as co-adjutors to him; but they were young men of the most abandoned characters. Constantine was now upwards of sixty years of age, and the greatest part of his life having been spent in camps and the field, he began to sink under the decays of nature. He had established Christianity as the religion of the empire, from motives that cannot now be accounted for, and yet for all that so wavering was he in his own mind, that he would not suffer himself to be baptized till he found death approaching. At last, he paid the debt of nature, regretted by the Christians, and abhorred by the heathens, in the sixty-second year of his age, after he had reigned thirty-two years in the most active manner.

With respect to his character, we are in a manner left in the dark concerning it; but so far as we are able to judge at this distance of time, it was not so amiable as represented by the Christians, nor so odious as the accounts that we meet with of it in the writings of the heathens. Addicted to pleasure, and a slave to his passions, Constantine paid very little regard to moral duties, any farther than the exercise of them could conduce towards promoting his own interest. It is true, he established Christianity as the religion of the empire, but then it must be remembered, that he did it in order to preserve the good will of the soldiers, most of whom were of that denomination. On the whole, he seems to have been a haughty sovereign, an accomplished politician, an hypocritical professor of religion, and one of a mean, selfish disposition. From

From the time of his death, the city of Rome, as the metropolis of the world, became in a manner an empty name. Many causes conduced towards promoting it, and some of those will appear evident from a careful perusal of the foregoing letters. Indeed in order to study the nature of history, and the rise and declension of any state, we have no more to do than to consider the simple narrative of facts in a philosophical light.

The causes that ensure the glory of an empire, and extends the conquests of the sovereign, are often too little attended to by those who read history, and much less by the people who lived in the ages when the facts took place. We are apt to sleep over things of the utmost importance, nor can any thing awake us till the use of the means are lost.

We are apt to blame those who have lived in ages before us, for giving an unlimited power to tyrants, and although the accusation may happen to be no more than partial, yet nothing is more common than those who complain of their predecessors, to give more encouragement than ever was thought of before, and even encourage tyrants to go on without the thoughts of ever being brought to justice.

We have already seen, that the Romans, from a poor, mean handful of robbers, who subsisted by plundering their neighbours, acted upon such principles of policy, that they became a powerful state, and even subdued many of the nations around them. We have seen them rise to the empire of the world in a gradual progressive manner, and we have beheld with concern, their sinking down to a state of oblivion. Some of the causes have already been pointed out, but in order

der to refresh your memory, I shall now present you with them in one point of view.

First, the Romans were an unsettled people, for the notions of an equality operated so strongly on their minds, that no sooner was a person invested with the discharge of his duty, as supreme magistrate, although only for a time, than the most trifling mistake committed by him was construed into a crime, and he generally suffered a violent death. They could not be brought to divest themselves of vulgar prejudices ; they had no notion of the necessity of subordination in every well regulated society, every citizen was looked upon as equal in power, and in consequence of that depraved notion, no proper respect was paid to those invested with magisterial authority.

Secondly, another cause of their unhappiness was, their frequent change of magistrates, for they seldom considered the effects of investing a person with plenary powers till they began to find that he had in consequence thereof set himself above the laws. Thus Sylla and Caius Marius were in effect as great tyrants as ever exercised the regal authority, and yet the vices of the people seemed to countenance the conduct of these men. Both had been invested with plenary powers, at least of a temporary nature, but no sooner had they discharged their duty to the commonwealth, than they became objects of jealousy, and were marked out for destruction.

The decimviri, the consuls, the tribunes of the people, the curuli aediles, with many other offices became equally detestable to them, for no sooner was an election made than it was repented of. But above all, the dictators were the most obnoxious to

the people, although they were raised to power by their voluntary consent.

This was a spring of tyranny that the most barbarous nations would not have submitted to. These men had a right to act in what manner they pleased, and even the senate were called to an account by them. Neither law nor equity could restrain them within proper bounds, while the people were slaves under the name of freemen.

Thirdly, Another cause why the Roman people were not in a settled condition, arose from a principle that took place in the first formation of their republic, namely the making a difference between the plebians and the patricians.

This gave the senate a power inconsistent with natural reason, and a contest took place on every occasion, that supplanted the interest of both. The senate looked upon themselves as the guardians of the laws, and the people who considered all their power as flowing from them, took every opportunity of opposing their decrees.

This occasioned the setting up of two sepearate interests in the same state, and both were inveterate enemies to each other. Many of the senators endeavoured by indirect practices to set aside the force of the Agrarian law, which the people looked upon as oppressive, because it tended towards making some of the members of the commonwealth more rich and powerful than was consistent with natural freedom. The disputes that arose in consequence of the infringement of this law, created many intestine divisions, and obliged the people, who had long struggled for liberty, to become so much reduced to misery, that they were glad, rather than suffer under so many domineering tyrants, to throw

throw themselves, without entering into any conditions, into the hands of arbitrary power.

Lastly, The choice that the Roman people made of Emperors was rather forced than free. Julius Cæsar, from a variety of concurring circumstances, made himself emperor of Rome, when the people were too impotent in consequence of their intestine divisions, to support their own importance in a becoming manner. It is true he was endowed with all those qualities that are necessary in a sovereign, but that power with which he was invested being of a precarious nature, and not confined to any restriction, and as his successors enjoyed the same, many of whom were a disgrace to human nature, so the dignity of the Roman people sunk into contempt, and the greatest empire in the world dwindled down to nothing.

Upon the whole, the loss of virtue occasioned the loss of power, and this ought to remain as a striking lesson to all those sovereigns or commanders who want to extend their conquests beyond proper bounds. The Romans were once sovereigns of great part of the habitable world, and as they had acquired that power by industry, so they lost it by sloth, and at present their name is only known in history, which will transmit it to the latest ages of posterity. Empires may rise and fall, but truth will remain unshaken.

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